MY FIRE OPAL

AND OTHER TALES

SARAH WARNER BROOKS.

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Sarah Warner Brooks

Jan. 1st 1898.

MY FIRE OPAL

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AND OTHER TALES

BY
SARAH WARNER BROOKS
AUTHOR OF "ENGLISH POETRY AND POETS"

BOSTON
ESTES AND LAURIAT
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By Sarah Warner Brooks

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Dedication

TO THE BELOVED MEMORY OF

ISABEL CORNWELL

THESE TALES ARE GRATEFULLY AND LOVINGLY

DEDICATED BY HER GRANDDAUGHTER

THE AUTHOR

The Lilacs, January, 1896

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PREFACE.

In the hope of interesting the reader in that insistent altruistic question of the hour — How may we best treat our *convicted* fellow sinners? — these simple tales (the outcome of intimate personal observation "behind the bars," and woven, almost equally, of fact and fiction) are offered for his kindly-indulgent perusal.

Most sincerely,

S. W. B.

West Medford, Jan. 31, 1896.

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MY FIRE OPAL.

ELL, have it all your own way, Isabel," meekly conceded Alcibiades; "but really, now, you ought not to be left here alone. Could n't you have managed to invite company for a day or two — Aunt Maria, say, or Alice Barnes, or Emma and the baby?"

"Company!" mocked I, "that now is *like* a man! Here am I planning to give poor, overworked Cicely a day or two off, while you are all away and the housework at its minimum, and straightway you propose *company!* — which, of course, implies regular meals and extra chamber work.

"No, I thank you, sir, not any *company* for *me*," said I, rising from the breakfast-table to drop my husband a derisive courtesy; "and indeed, and indeed," I urged, "you are not to give up your own vacation because your wife is scared of burglars and bugbears, with

neighbors as thick as blackberries, within call, and a stout policeman snoozing away his beat against our front fence!"

Alcibiades sighed and folded his napkin. I felt that he was still unconvinced. Nevertheless, he mounted the stairs, packed his grip, and, intent upon catching the next horse-car, bade me a hurried adieu. "*Au revoir!*" cried I, "in the wind of his going," "and, in case of burglars —

> "'Fare thee well! and if forever,
> Then—'"

already he had disappeared, and, closing the door, I resumed my unfinished breakfast. When Cicely came in to clear the table, I rejoiced her heart, by a full consent to her little vacation. Relieved of mind, she plunged vigorously into the Saturday scrubbing, and, having prospectively arranged my Sunday dinner, of pressed corned beef, was enabled to start for "me cousin's in South Boston" at two P. M.

As she whisked out, with a beaming smile, a brick-red face, and a huge newspaper bundle, I locked the door behind her, and found myself "Monarch of all I surveyed."

One fancies that even "Alexander Selkirk" — dreary as his lot was — must have found some slight compensation in the undisputed possession of an entire island. However it may have been with *him*, *I* must confess to acute satisfaction in the lordly consciousness of absolute sway over that miniature realm — my own domicile.

Delightful, indeed, was the prospect of regulating my "downsittings and uprisings," my bed, and meal times, in fine accordance with my own sweet will, absolutely untrammeled by the ordinary necessity of deferring to the wishes, and respecting the claims, of my fellow-mortals!

A long, lawless afternoon, with all its pleasant possibilities, lay temptingly before me. Straightway, with book and work, I established myself on the shady piazza. Pleasantly remote from the street it was, yet still so near, that, like the Lady of Shallot, "'neath her bower eaves," I could glimpse the passing sights on ——— Street, could discern the distant peak of "Corey Hill," and catch, now and then, between the wind-tossed trees, a blue gleam of the "Whispering Charles."

Close at hand was my own pretty flower-plot, but lately (by the united efforts of the entire Simpleton family) reclaimed from a desolate tangle of tomato vines, string-beans, and chickweed, and planted with greenhouse beauties, which, now that summer was gone, and early frosts nightly expected, had tantalizingly put forth abundant bloom. The September evenings had already begun to draw chillingly in. By six o'clock, the piazza had become uncomfortable, and I betook myself to the house. Its absolute possession, at this sombre hour, struck me as a trifle less desirable than in the broad sunshine of noonday.

Having carefully locked the outer doors, and bestowed the scanty family silver in the garret rag-bag, a general inspection of the window fastenings seemed the next best thing to do. "Let me," I said to myself, "begin at the beginning." In accordance with this excellent maxim, I at once descended to the cellar. No sooner had I stepped into that dusky portion of my realm, than some live thing, rushing madly between my feet, had nearly upset me. I suppressed a childish shriek of terror. I recognised the cat. I am not fond of cats, hence *ours*, when not taking her walks

abroad, is strictly relegated to the cellar, where, after her best endeavours, mice are ever o'er plenty. I found the cellar windows not only devoid of fastenings, but partially denuded of glass. Abandoning the idea of securing *that* slip-shod approach to my stronghold, I beat a hasty retreat, pussy, meantime, at my heels, and brushing my gown with disagreeable familiarity.

The door leading to the cellar stairway had, in addition to its lock, a stout bolt. I carefully secured it by both, and, as twilight was coming on, shot, with a will, the hasps of such window fastenings, in the first and second stories, as had obligingly retained their patent adjustments, and, with hammer and nails, proceeded to secure the rest. Meantime, night was upon me. My own footsteps sounded uncanny, as I passed from room to room, and my hammer-strokes, as I drove in nail after nail, set my startled nerves on edge. In shadowy corners of the dusky apartments, sinister shapes seemed lurking. Imaginary footfalls echoed weirdly in the chambers above. The cat purring offensively, and still dogging my steps, innocently contributed to the general uncomfortableness.

Regardless (in this exigent moment) of the quarterly bill, I turned on at every jet a lavish flow of gas, until one superb glare flooded the entire ground floor of Irving Cottage. Reassured by this reckless illumination, I betook myself to the preparation of supper. In consequence of the kitchen fire having gone out, it was a strictly informal meal, consisting solely of sardines, crackers, and lithia water.

Supping, with nervous despatch, I cleared my table, gorged the cat (who, in the unwonted dearth of society, was permitted to lodge in the kitchen), and, making a final survey of the brilliant lower story, turned off the gas, and, match in hand (and with a directness that would have proved the salvation of "Lot's wife"), sought my bedroom.

Lighting my gas, I locked my door, looked under the bed, made an exhaustive search in the closets, and, composed and reassured, sat down to the completion of Black's last novel. Ere long, absorbed in the fortunes of poor, love-crazed "Mac Leod of Dare," I became utterly oblivious of my own dreary situation. Once, the ringing of the side door-bell recalled me to the actual, but, having deter-

mined to open to no man *that* night, I discreetly lowered the gas, and, peeping from behind my window-shade, made sure that it was the expressman, and then coolly let him ring. He must have more than exhausted his notoriously scant stock of patience ere I heard him drive off, swearing awfully at his horses, as he lashed them down the drive. It may be recorded, in this connection, that Cicely, some five days later, on opening her pantry shutter to drive out the flies, discovered a blood-stained, brown paper parcel thrust in, and firmly wedged, between window and blind. On examination, it was found to contain the perishing bodies of three hapless squabs, which Alcibiades, in a reckless excess of conjugal tenderness, had bought (as a toothsome addition to my Sunday dinner), on his way to the railroad station.

When this touching proof of my good husband's indulgent care came to light, I take shame to confess that, hardening my heart, I mocked thus wickedly to myself,— "The *idiot!* to fancy that a sane woman would scorch herself over a coal-stove, broiling squabs for her own healthy self, with corned beef, sardines, and delicious olives at hand!"

But, to return from this digression — the ireful expressman well away — I sailed serenely on to midnight, and the last harrowing chapter of my novel. Then bathing my strained eyes, and reducing my light to the merest flicker, I crept wearily to bed.

After a whole fidgety hour spent in the composure of my nerves, and the resolving into natural causes of such "noises of the night" as successively set my hair on end, I fell asleep.

The sun was already high when I awoke. It was a lovely September morning. Recalling, with amused wonder, the groundless alarms of the last eventless night, I bathed and dressed in great spirits, and descended to the preparation of breakfast.

Yesterday's coffee, warmed over in an Ætna, was less palatable than I could have imagined, and, easily resisting the indulgence of a second cup, I completed, with scant relish, my untempting meal.

The ringing of the church bells surprised me in my morning work. It was Sunday. Not for a moment, however, must I entertain the idea of going to church!

In C——, bold, day-time robberies were

familiar occurrences, and, in my absence, our unguarded domicile would become an easy prey for the spoiler. The outer doors, three in number, were securely fastened, and I especially congratulated myself upon the complete security of the glass door opening from our parlour upon the piazza, as, in addition to its regular fastening, it rejoiced in an admirable catch-lock, that snapped beautifully, of itself, as one closed it.

As the morning wore on, weary of reading, I wrote some letters, and thereafter overhauled my writing-desk. Among my accumulated correspondence, I found half a score of stiffly-worded epistles. They had been indited by inmates of the Massachusetts State Prison. To elucidate the controlling event of my story, let me say, that helpful effort among the convicts had long been an integral part of my life-work.

Among themselves, they were pleased to term me "The Prisoner's Friend," and, when discharged, and homeless, they often came to me for counsel, or aid, in procuring that employment which, naturally, is but grudgingly given to these attainted beings, whom, even as *visitors*, my friends considered objectionable.

On Mondays, my weekly visit to the prison hospital was made. I carried to its patients fruit and flowers, and read to them, sandwiching in, as best I could, a modicum of reproof and advice.

The re-reading, sorting, and bestowal of this odd correspondence brought me to dinner-time. An unsubstantial breakfast having whetted my appetite for this important meal, I resolved to start a fire in the kitchen stove. Having achieved this exploit — with that absurd outlay of time, strength, and patience, peculiar to the amateur — I laboriously elaborated an omelet, a dish of Lyonnaise potatoes, and a steaming pot of tea.

Heated and weary, I hurried through the parlours, threw open the piazza door for a whiff of fresh air, before dishing my dinner, and, attracted by the grateful odor of heliotrope, stepped debonairly into the outside sunshine. As I passed, the "sweet west wind" whipped to the piazza door. It closed behind me, with a malicious bang. The much admired patent fastening had, but too well, done its fatal work! I stood diabolically fastened out of my own house! Recovering breath, and taking in the desper-

ate situation, I glanced ruefully at my neighbour's back bow window. Miss Pettingrew, my next neighbour, was an elderly maiden, and of curiosity "all compact." Nominally (as set forth on her sign of blue and gold) a dressmaker, but adding to her regular vocation the supervision of our neighbourhood, the outgoings and incomings of the Simpletons were especially focussed by her awful eye.

Our neighbourhood was not socially congenial. We had come to C—— for the sole purpose of putting a son through Harvard, and, having no other local interest in that city, we were simply the nobodies from nowhere, and consequently ineligible as acquaintances.

Irving Cottage — so called from its supposed resemblance to that of Washington Irving — attracted us by an exceptional allowance of door-yard, combined with a moderate rent. Irving Cottage was a double tenement-house; and its north side was now vacant. Its western front commanded — street; its south side an uninterrupted series of back door-yards. On the north it was overtopped by a tall storage building, and in its

rear stood a weather-worn old colonial mansion, once an aristocratic abode, but now fallen upon evil times, and become a rackety students' boarding-house. A low picket fence divided our rear premises from those of Mrs. MacNebbins, its proprietor. And now, let me return from this parenthetic information to my forlorn self, drearily surveying my "hermetically sealed" dwelling.

Yes, Miss Pettingrew was, as usual, at her post. It behooved me to take heed to my ways — to step nonchalantly from the piazza, as if being in the yard were entirely optional. Taking a turn or two up and down the drive, I rested a moment beneath the lordly old willows that adorned our grounds. I pulled a nosegay from the flower-garden; hunted the grass-plot for four-leaved clover — meantime furtively scanning my window fastenings and praying inwardly that some unguarded point of ingress to Irving Cottage might be revealed to me.

In vain! I had too well done my fatal work! Not the merest crack had been left exposed. The cottage rejoiced in a terraced front. Thus the lower back windows were, at least, five feet above the door-yard level.

A possible elevation of piazza chairs would command them. I might, with a stone, demolish a convenient pane, and so reach and manipulate a patent fastening; but there still was Miss Pettingrew! How could I break and enter my own house, in broad daylight, and on a Sunday, directly beneath her astonished gaze? Heavy at heart (and mentally craving that lady's kind permission), I sought shelter beneath the kindly woodbine that shut in our piazza. Hungry, discouraged, and forlorn, I moped the slow hours away, until the westward sloping sun and the chill of approaching evening warned me that night was drawing near.

Luckily, I had, on my way out, thrown about me a light shawl. Shivering, I wrapped it close, and then — providentially inspired — I bethought me of a place of refuge, — to wit: the woodshed, adjoining our kitchen! It was but a flimsy structure, but would, at least, be warmer than an open piazza.

Its inner door, now carefully bolted, opened upon the kitchen. Its outer entrance was, however, but slightly secured by a hook, easily manipulated from without, by the insertion of a thin stick. I felt that an

entrance might be unostentatiously effected. Eagerly awaiting that auspicious moment when Miss Pettingrew should, at tea-time, vacate her post of observation, I sallied forth upon the lawn, and — still hunting for four-leaved clover — managed to gain the rear of my house. My ogress opportunely disappeared! Already provided with the needful stick, it was but the work of a moment to insert it in the crevice of the loosely-fitting door, to raise the hook, and step gingerly in. Thank heaven, I was, at least, beneath a roof! Humble, indeed, but yet an improvement upon an open sky, or even a vine-draped piazza! And Miss Pettingrew need never know that I had come to grief. Fortunately I wore my watch. It was a slight comfort to note the passage of these unkindly hours. It was now quarter past four. I had become desperately hungry. My mind ran tantalizingly upon the untasted dinner within. Long ere this, my tea must have resolved itself to pure tannin! My omelette and my Lyonnaise must have become the merest chips; and the cat had, no doubt, privately disposed of my precious corned beef. Well, all was not lost! A full hour yet

loomed between me and sunset. Given that time, might I not find some escape from my dilemma?

The colonial mansion of the MacNebbins's backed squarely upon our premises. And our woodshed backed, in turn, upon a roomy lawn —now degraded to an open lot which faced upon B—— Street. In the absence of windows upon that wall of the building, a knot-hole, generously enlarged by our boys, served admirably as a lookout. At this inconveniently high aperture, I watched (on tip-toe) the careless throng, strolling, in Sunday attire, up and down B—— Street. This wholesome, but tame, diversion palled upon me. My jaded appetite craved more exciting nourishment.

Mrs. MacNebbins — poor, overworked body, with a temper of her own — and maintaining, single-handed, half a dozen children and a shiftless sot of a husband, sometimes became desperate. On such occasions, it suited her, broomstick in hand, to drive her worse half from the house, the maids, meantime, looking applause from her kitchen windows. My own boys (in spite of my prohibition) had, I regret to say, often audibly applauded this conjugal

exhibition. Such a spicy scene would, I felt, be in fine keeping with the situation, and I blush to own that I now turned my attention to the MacNebbins's back door, in the vulgar hope of an immediate connubial skirmish. In vain! Mr. MacNebbins sat composedly smoking on his back doorsteps; while his more forceful half flitted about the kitchen, intent on the dishing of the students' dinner. Now and then a tantalizing whiff of the roast issued from the open windows. By this time, I had become disgracefully ravenous; and when, after the MacNebbins's dinner, the cook came out to deposit the leavings in that objectionable swill-barrel, close to our back fence, I blush to record that I looked with longing upon the remnants of this (to *me*, Barmecide) feast. Halved potatoes, slices of pudding, and savoury bits of meat, lay temptingly on the over-heaped barrel. I sighed. It was like "starving in the midst of abundance."

For one wild moment, I thought of rushing into the open street, in my morning wrapper, with a shawl over my head, and imploring somebody to break into my house, and feed me.

But, no! Self-respect forbade a proceeding

so insane; and, moreover, should I not thus advertise the fact of my being alone in the house, and at the mercy of the spoiler? Night would soon prevent that attempt which I had half resolved to make upon the back window, and which might, possibly, end in defeat, glass-splinters, and lockjaw. It was now raining. The east wind wailed dolefully around the shed. I must, nevertheless, make shift to lodge there. To that end, I carefully considered the capabilities of the place. On a rude shelf, near the woodpile, I found a gummy kerosene lamp, replete with ill-smelling oil. Beside it was a tin box, containing three matches. In a corner stood a barrel of clean shavings, and, beneath the wash-bench, a basket of soiled clothes.

I had soon disposed the shavings in the form of a couch. Two sheets, used but a single night in the guest-room, and comparatively unsoiled, served for a light covering. On a high peg hung a rusty overcoat, which, on fishing excursions, had repeatedly served my good Alcibiades. It had come to exhale a perpetual "ancient and fish-like smell," and, in consideration of my outraged nostrils, had been relegated to the shed. Alas! I had not

now the "proud stomach" which distinguished "Mr. F's Aunt;" and, clothing myself in this unsavoury garment, I thanked heaven for even so ignoble a protection from the searching east wind, now entering, by every crevice and knot-hole, my indifferently constructed sleeping-room.

Drearily casting myself upon this rude couch, I endeavoured to compose my limbs for sleep. Unnumbered poets have rapturously celebrated "the rain on the roof." I had myself once offered to a stony-hearted magazine editor some "lines" on this very subject; yet to-day, shivering, starved, and but half housed — heaven knows that the even pelting of this pitiless storm above my forlorn head was nothing, if not prosaic! I remembered, too, that my only door-fastening was a slight hook, easily set at naught.

What facilities were here offered to a prowling tramp, intent upon a night's shelter! When, for a moment, I could withdraw my poor mind from the terrible pangs of hunger, it was but to fix it upon this fearful possibility. Yes, I was undoubtedly at the mercy of all the tramps in the immediate vicinity of C——! What would Alcibiades — what would my boys

(camping out at Great Brewster, with a *circus* tent, comforters in abundance, and every appliance known to youthful Bohemia) say, if they could, this night, look in upon their miserable relative? But, no; Alcibiades should never hear how — by rejecting his safe counsel — I had dedicated myself to desolation. The misery of this night must be forever locked in my own breast! Of course, I could not be expected to close my eyes during the entire night; and, when morning came — should my life be spared till then — I should be too much exhausted from starvation to crawl out of the shed, and should, should, shou— here, I fell fast asleep!

A single hour could scarce have passed, when I was aroused by a slight jar, as of some one leaning heavily against the frame of the shed, directly where I had made my bed. In a moment I was broad awake, and, with my heart in my mouth, intently listening. I now sorely regretted having left my lamp burning; and wished I had, at least, plugged the wide knot-hole looking street-ward. The one small window, opening on our own premises, I had carefully darkened, but had forgotten to screen this irregular look-out. Luckily, it

did not command, from the outside, my impromptu bed.

Directly beneath it, I could now hear footsteps. Evidently, an investigation was being made by some person outside. I managed to get upon my feet, and thus await the dreaded issue.

There was a clumsy scramble, a thud on the wet ground inside the fence, and then came heavy footsteps, evidently approaching my place of refuge. The door was tried, vigorously shaken, and opened by a crack; and then I knew that some one was manipulating the hook with a stick; was making an entrance, as I myself had done, but a few hours ago! I tottered weakly over to the woodpile. I had need to stay myself well against it, so paralyzed with fear had I become. I felt my limbs giving way; an age of horror seemed to pass in the brief moments that ensued before the hook yielded.

The door flew open with a bang! and, then, — then the entire shed reeled, darkened, disappeared; and I knew no more!

Consciousness returning, I found myself reclined upon my shaving couch. A pile of soiled clothes supported my head; my face

and hair were dripping with water, which had apparently been showered upon me without stint, or stay, from a wooden piggin standing near, which I remembered to have set under a big leak in the woodshed roof, before settling myself to repose.

Beside me stood a tall, bearded person, holding in his left hand a smoking kerosene lamp, and with his right still liberally sprinkling me from the piggin, and, the while, anxiously scanning my face. As my scattered senses pulled themselves together, I discerned that his demeanour was pacific — even friendly. I found his face by no means bad, with its strong features, determined expression, and the kindly smile which disclosed his sound, white teeth. As I attempted to rise, he said, respectfully: "Pray lie down a bit, madam; you 'll be all right again in a moment. You fainted dead away; and, upon my word, I could have knocked myself down for giving you such a turn. It was a deuced sight worse, too," added he, "when I found that you were 'The Prisoner's Friend.'

"Maybe *you* don't know my face now, madam; but I have known yours, any time, these four years; ever since you brought me

that fruit with the posy of pinks an' old-man's love, the time I was laid up in the prison hospital."

No; I could not recall the man's face; but I remember well that such a person had sent me, through the warden, a grateful acknowledgment of my little kindness, in the form of a rosewood box, inlaid with mother-of-pearl and lined with garnet velvet (his own dainty work), and containing a paper thus inscribed:

"Adam Beale, to 'The Prisoner's Friend,' with best wishes."

The warden, as I presently recollected, had, at that time, told me that Adam was serving out five years' sentence for passing a forged check. Well, here, like a Jack-in-a-box, Adam himself had turned up.

It was now *my* turn to "take unto myself shame and confusion of face," — found harbouring in a shed, alone, and at midnight! To give the man, an ex-convict, and alone with me, in this forlorn place, that explanation demanded by the situation, would undoubtedly put me absolutely at his mercy, yet, perceiving that there was no other way out of it, I at once made a clean breast. The tale of my woes well finished, the humour of the

whole affair, together with Adam's expression of blank amazement, so upset me that I ended with a peal of hysterical laughter, in which, as I could see by the twitching of his visible muscles, good manners alone restrained my auditor from joining me.

Wisely deferring the relation of his own adventures to serener moments, my convict, at my request, at once set about the work of breaking and entering.

The storm had abated. It was now midnight, and Miss Pettingrew presumably off duty. With empty barrels and boxes, found in the shed, the level of a side window was soon attained, and Adam, demolishing a pane of glass, deftly undid a patent fastening. It was but a moment ere he had entered, and unlocked the side door for the admission of my somewhat crestfallen self.

Nor was it long ere my deliverer had made a famous fire in the kitchen stove, and, in his shirt-sleeves, while his dripping coat steamed hard by on a clothes-horse, was preparing a pot of coffee, while I laid the supper-table.

It goes, without saying, that my zest for this meal was not slight; and the hunger of my guest, as may be inferred, was well-nigh

as sharp as my own. The cat having obligingly dined and supped upon omelette and Lyonnaise potato, my corned beef was still intact; and, with some trifling additions, and that best of sauces — hunger — our meal proved delicious.

Well, thought I, as I bestowed a second section of sponge cake, and a third cup of coffee, upon my hungry guest — truth is, undoubtedly, stranger than fiction! Could Alcibiades (dear man!) be told that, by scorning his kind advice, I had brought myself to so strange a pass as to be supping at midnight with an ex-convict, would he believe it? As for my dazed self, well could I have craved, with that historical old woman of abridged "petticoat," the decisive "bark" of my own "little dog" as assurance that "I was *I*."

Our hunger appeased, Adam told me how he had come to find himself on that stormy night, on his way to Boston, penniless and shelterless. His sentence had, he said, expired three weeks ago; and, with his "freedom suit," and the regulation gratuity of five dollars from the Prison Aid Society, along with its immemorial offer of a ticket for the

West, he had been duly discharged. Having a mind to re-establish himself in his native city — New York — he had declined emigrating to Idaho, but, finding himself somewhat the worse for five years of confinement, bad air, and poor diet, had resolved to recruit for a time, in mountain air, before seeking his city home.

With the State gratuity, and nearly forty dollars of his own prison earnings in his purse, Adam had set forth on a frugal pedestrian tour. Having taken by the way a heavy cold, he had been obliged to lay by, for a whole fortnight, at a country tavern; and what with the board bill, the doctor's fee, and the charges for medicine, his slim purse had been soon drained. Recovered from his ailment, and renovated by the healing mountain air, he had found himself absolutely penniless, and had made thus far his homeward journey, in dependence on charity for food and shelter. Passing through B—— Street to crave a night's lodging at the station-house, he had espied my light through the big knot-hole of the shed, and, on inspection, finding the place apparently unoccupied, weary and wet as he was, it had then seemed

wise to accept the nearest possibility of shelter; and he had accordingly determined to attempt an entrance to this lighted outbuilding — little thinking, as he said, to find, in so rude a place, a lady whose person was held sacred by every man in the prison.

And now, to make a long story short, Adam's recital ended, we dried his clothes, washed our supper dishes, "ridded up" the kitchen, and then took into consideration the question of ways and means. Before falling into temptation, Adam Beale had been a real estate broker, and though not, hitherto, an eminently successful one, he meant, if possible, to re-establish himself in the old business. This he thought might be done in the whirl of a great city, where identity is easily disguised, or even lost, and — and — and then — I may as well confess it at once — it all ended in my slipping off my diamond ring (one of my girlhood's treasures, and the only valuable bit of jewelry in my possession) and, after much persuasion, inducing Adam to accept it as a loan, and by putting it in pawn realize a sum that would again set him on his feet. "But, dear me!" exclaims the prudent reader, "was not this a most unsafe

venture?" Yes, I suppose so; but then, most ventures *are*, more or less, *unsafe*. And, after all, what is a single diamond, or, indeed, a whole cluster of them, when weighed against the possibility of restoring a man to the safe path of rectitude, the saving of a soul?

This risky transaction well over, Adam, by his own election, retired to pass the remainder of this strange night in the woodshed. I bestowed upon him a pillow and some warm comforters, and the cat politely kept him company, glad, no doubt, to escape from her dull imprisonment in the kitchen.

As my convict would be afoot at early dawn, his adieus were made overnight. Once more in my own safe room, and blest with a regular bed, bolster, and pillow, I rested from the fatigue and excitement of the last ten hours, and, on consideration, felt that my mishap was all for the best. Though not downrightly distrustful of Adam, I still remembered that I had not, as the saying goes, "wintered and summered" the man. I may consequently be pardoned the uneasy consciousness that my belongings (to say nothing of myself) were a thought less safe

than if lodged in the United States Bank; for had not my new friend, but two hours since, evinced that easy facility in breaking and entering, supposed to be inherent in the convict and the tramp? After an hour or two of uneasy slumber, it was an infinite relief to hear the "loud clarion" of an early cockerel, followed by an audible stir in the woodshed and a heavy footstep in the yard. Springing from my bed, I watched Adam's tall form as it passed evenly down the drive. Well outside our gate, he went directly down street, and soon disappeared from my view. After that, I slept the blessed sleep of the weary and content, though not until I had taken the precaution to bring from the shed the tell-tale pillow and comforter devoted to Adam's use.

The sun was already four hours high, when Cicely's return awoke me. I scrambled down to let her in, and, ere long, was seated at the late breakfast which she briskly prepared for me. As I lingered luxuriously over my coffee, this valued Hibernian abruptly entered, with upraised hands, and hair on end, to inform me that "a nasty divil of a tramp, be the tokens, had slept the night in

our woodshed. An' God save us, me'm," went on the excited creature, "wid yurself slapin aboove like an innocent babe, an' the master an' young jintlemen away, and meself takin' me ase at me cousin's! Praise be to God ye were n't killed intirely! Come out, if ye plase, me'm, this same minute, and see, wid your two eyes, where the crature slept." Regretting that I had thoughtlessly left palpable evidence of Adam's visit, I meekly followed Cicely into the shed.

"Did you find the door unhooked, Cicely?" I inquired, aware that *something* must be said.

"Unhooked, is it?" replied she, "indade an' it was thin! an' wide open! Holy Mary! but it 's the narrow escape ye 's had!"

"Cicely," I said, decisively, "put these shavings back in the barrel. They will kindle as well as ever, and the sheets will come out, unharmed, from the wash. As for this fishy coat, when Dennis comes for the ashes, you may as well give it to *him*. There is some wear in it yet. And, upon the whole, Cicely, you had better say nothing of the tramp to Mr. Simpleton and the young gentlemen. It would only frighten them, and to no purpose, as it 's now all past and gone."

That afternoon, during my visit to the State Prison, I related to the warden so much of the above adventure as pertained to my transaction with Adam Beale. I found that he had been discharged as stated, and had declared his intention of recruiting while in the country, before returning to his home in New York, "but as for your diamond ring, my dear lady," said the astute official, "make up your mind that you have parted with it for good and all; for, as *I* know the convict, not one in a hundred could resist the temptation of retaining it."

"Well," I said, resignedly, "let it go, then; life is replete with mishaps, and I have already survived many a disaster, far more heavy than the loss of a diamond."

When my little family were again re-united, it was Alcibiades who first observed and commented on the continuous absence of my diamond ring from my left-hand middle finger.

"Oh, my ring?" I said, lightly, "well, I am just leaving it off for a time. One does not care to appear eternally in diamonds, like a fat *frau* of a German Jew."

Alcibiades, least inquisitive of mortals,

thus easily put off, I resigned myself to the loss of my ring, confident that, at the worst, it had not (as "Mantalini" would have put it) quite "gone to the demnition bow-wows."

More than six months had elapsed, when, one day, the expressman handed me a small package, addressed in a fine, clear hand, and marked "valuable — *with care*."

Luckily, I was alone, and could, unquestioned, receipt for the parcel. It was, as I had suspected, my ring; and glad was I to receive it, but still more rejoiced to have found, unaided by the lantern of *any* Diogenes, an *honest* man!

And now, my story might, with propriety, end. It does not, however, for I have yet to relate how it was that I, the wife of a clerk in the post-office, drawing but an indifferent salary, came into possession of so sumptuous an adornment as a Mexican fire opal, superbly set in diamonds of the very first water.

Ten years had passed since the adventure which resulted in the loaning of my ring to Adam Beale. Our boy had gone honourably through Harvard. We no longer trembled at Miss Pettingrew's "awful nod." We had left C—— for good and all. My health no

longer permitted me to engage in hospital work, and I had ceased to visit the prison. We were on the eve of our silver wedding, and one evening, as we sat round our hearth in Roxbury, cheerfully talking over the event, which was to be celebrated by a little party, the door-bell rang, and was followed by the entrance of our expressman.

Taking a long breath of relief, he deposited on the hall table a small, carefully-sealed parcel, which, as he said, "had 'bout been the rounds, he reckoned, for, near's he could find out, it started from New York, paid through to C——. Then it came back to the office in Boston, an arter *they* had had a time on't *there*, lookin' up the folks 'at was wanted, he got wind on't himself, and here now it is," he concluded, triumphantly, "landed at last."

As it was directed to me, I wrote my name in his greasy book, Alcibiades paid the accumulated expressage, and the man at once left us.

We were a little curious in regard to this much-traveled parcel — some simple silver-wedding present, no doubt. But "great the wonder grew," when a magnificent fire opal

ring, with superb diamond setting, flashed out from its nest of rose-coloured cotton, like a condensed rainbow, circled with sunbeams.

In the package, with the box, was a note directed to "The Prisoner's Friend." It ran thus:

"DEAR LADY: I am now a rich man. Your kindness will ever be held in remembrance; and may I ask your prayers for my future prosperity in this life, and a pleasant meeting with you in the life to come.

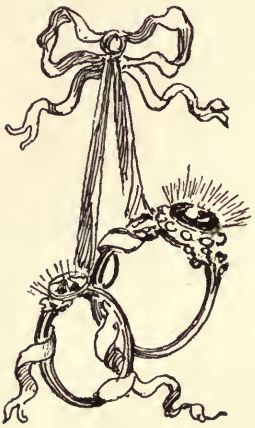
"Pray accept the enclosed ring, with warmest wishes for the health, prosperity, and happiness of you and yours. I remain, with great respect,

"Your obedient servant,

"ADAM BEALE."

That night, from a full heart, I confided to my family the story of that strange midnight adventure, whose touching sequel was this costly gift. Dear Alcibiades (to his eternal credit be it recorded) did not on this occasion harrow my soul with a single "I told you so!" On the evening of my silver wedding I wore Adam's ring. My friends were informed that I had resolved never to disclose the name of the donor of this superb opal; yet, now that I am an old woman, in the hope that it may afford some slight encouragement

to others who are seeking to lighten the heavy human burden of sin, and its consequent misery, I have thought that it might not be unwise or indelicate to reveal the long-kept secret of my Fire Opal.



THE STORY
OF
JOHN GRAVESEND

THE STORY OF JOHN GRAVESEND.

OHN GRAVESEND, being neither goblin, sprite nor fairy, it is but logical to infer that his existence was derived from a mortal father; albeit of that father, he, John, had not the faintest conception.

Poor little Jack! He was, what men (misusing the holiest of words) have named, a "love-child."

His father was plainly but an inference; and, as to his mother, she was scarce more than a recollection.

He recalled, from some vague long ago, the face of a sad-eyed woman at whose knee he had said "Now I lay me," with his sleepy little head half-buried in the soft folds of her silken gown. He remembered the same sweet face more pale and still and icy cold. He was not saying his prayer *then.* He

thinks he was crying. Be that as it may; Jack cried a good deal in those days. He cried because he was cold, hungry, tired, or beaten; and, later on, he fell into a way of crying for an undefined good — a something which neither warmth, food, nor rest could afford him. This vague sense of irrepletion had first dawned upon the forlorn boy when, on a certain day, creeping about Long Wharf like a half-starved rat, he had seen another boy in a velvet jacket, and with lovely corn-silk hair, folded in the arms of a beautiful lady, but just landed from a newly-arrived steamer. From that hour a nameless longing for that undefined something, which the other lad had gotten from that gentle lady, haunted his love-lorn days.

Sometimes he actually found himself crying for it. Of this — and all other crying — Jack, being a manly little fellow, was so heartily ashamed that (to use his own words) he "swowed never to let on to his folks." Jack's "folks" were — a reputed uncle, by trade a shipwright. A creature habitually red of face; cross in the morning and nasty at night; chronically glum on week-days, and invariably sprightly on Sundays; for then it

was the shipwright's prerogative to get superbly drunk!

During these Sabbath celebrations, the man (having no children of his own body to maltreat) often diverted himself by belabouring his ragged little nephew; who, more or less battered, wriggled dexterously from his clutch, and, seeking his familiar haunt, the wharf, there wore out the weary day. Jack's other "folk" was the wife of the aforesaid uncle; a poor, cowed creature, with pinched, wan face and pale, carroty hair. When the boy, upon a Sunday, did not come readily to hand, the aunt was beaten in his stead. She did not run away, this poor, spiritless scapegoat, but wearily mounting a ladder-like staircase, took sanctuary in the loft. Later, when a drunken slumber enwrapped her lord, she reappeared upon the scene, with set lips, and face so white and ghastly, that little Jack, remembering vaguely that *other* still, white face, crept uneasily out into the sunlight, and tried to forget it.

One day, when the shipwright had beaten his wife terribly, and there was blood upon her clean Sunday gown, she did not, as usual, betake herself to that "city of refuge,"

the loft; but, groaning faintly, fell prone upon the floor. Jack's uncle then making a dive at *him*, the child scampered off to the wharf as fast as his trembling little legs would carry him. When he had skipped a good many stones into the water, had watched ever so many clouds and vessels sail by, and had seen the crimson water swallow the bloated fiery sun, little Jack felt hungry, and thought it high time to be getting home to his folks. Forlorn little waif! His *folks*, unsatisfactory as they were, were no longer available.

He found the shipwright's dwelling thronged with excited men and women. Upon the bed lay a still, white heap. Fancying that it might be the pinch-faced aunt, who had so long partially fed and clothed him, the child pushed forward, and, creeping softly to the bed, touched, with his dirty little hand, that still, white face.

Ugh! *His* folks were never as cold as *that!*

Repelled by this icy horror, the child stole quietly away, and, crouching timidly in a far corner of the thronged apartment, watched it all.

There was a deal of commotion in Jack's folks' house that Sunday evening; and Jack's uncle, staring vacantly at a gaping throng of men, boys, and frowsy-headed women, and sustained by two doughty dignitaries of the law, was finally conveyed absolutely beyond the line of his childish vision. After this, another gentleman, in bright buttons, summarily cleared the house, and locked the door, with the child on the wrong side of it; and, unheeded, hungry, shelterless, and forlorn, the lad crept silently away. And this is all that Jack remembers of his folks. The next tableau in his memory is that of a ship's cabin, and a fat steward in a white apron, who, as he wells remembers, went busily up and down the companionway, fetching steaming viands, and carrying away empty plates and soiled glasses, which had often, at bottom, a modicum of something strong and nice. He liked it — this fine, fiery stuff! — and when whole spoonfuls had been left in the glasses, and he had been let to drain them all, he felt as cheery as could be; and, at bedtime, went off to his small bunk as happy as a king. But when at dinner-time the steward, in his hurry-skurry, kicked him out of

the way, and called him "a d—d little son of a gun, whom (like a soft-hearted lubber) he had smuggled into the *Argo* to save from the poorhouse," Jack fled dejectedly to his bunk to cry alone.

Yes, he remembered well, how a long time ago — very long indeed it seemed in Jack's childish measurement of time — that cruel hunger had gnawed at his poor, depleted little stomach, when his folks' door was fast locked, and he prowling miserably about the wharf; and how the good steward had then found and fed him. From that day, he had clung to his deliverer — his providence — like a grateful spaniel, and, still at his heels, here he was in the great *Argo*, sailing on and on, no doubt, to the very end of the world.

Yes, he knew all that; and he meant to be thankful and good; but was he, for certain true, "a son of a gun?" His father, as before stated, being but an inference, Jack concluded, upon the whole, that he *might* be.

By and by, when the old steward (whose bite was in no wise as formidable as his bark) had tided over his "hurry-skurry," and, having given him his dinner, tossed him playfully to the ceiling, like a plump little ball, as he

was, when he set him to play all manner of monkey tricks for his own and the crew's diversion, calling him "a droll shaver," instead of that other objectionable name, he forgot, for the time, his childish grievances, and was comparatively content.

He liked the rough-handed steward who alternately kicked and petted him, and who, after his own poor fashion, apparently loved him. Yet, taken as they went, these were but uncomfortable years for the loving, sensitive child; and the nice fiery sups from the cabin tumblers were, on the whole, the most comfortable feature of Jack Gravesend's earlier cabin-boy experience.

As the years went on, from being by turns a nuisance and a pet, the boy became a deft-handed helper to his testy old patron, and, coming to man's estate, not only won favour with the *Argo's* crew, but found grace in the eyes of her captain. When the fat steward, in a fit of apoplexy, went off in a final hurry-skurry, to Davy Jones's locker, Jack was promoted to his berth.

Time sped. John Gravesend, from a poor cabin-boy, had come to be second mate of the *Ohio*, when William Ferguson, as bonnie a

blue-eyed lad as one might hail in a cruise round the world, had shipped as foremast hand in that stanch new craft. Then it was that our hero first knew that supreme good for which he had been instinctively yearning through all his lonely life — the true love of a human soul.

Will Ferguson, a delicate boy of eighteen, neither by birth or education suited to a sailor's life, was the only son of his mother, and she was a widow. He had a persistent cough, came of consumptive stock, and the doctor assured Madame Ferguson that a long sea voyage, if she could but bring her mind to it, would be the very thing for the lad.

"There is the *Ohio*," he went on to say, "now in port, and a finer ship never sailed." Her captain trustworthy, and her second mate personally known to him. Only last year he had carried the fellow through an attack of typhoid, at Chelsea hospital, and if, as he was saying, she could bring her mind to the thing, he would speak a good word for Will, to this officer, Gravesend — John Gravesend—who would, no doubt, keep a kindly eye on her boy all through the voyage.

Madame Ferguson *did* bring her mind to it,

although the parting was as if her heart had been torn from her warm, living side. And thus it was that Will Ferguson went sailing out of his mother's yearning sight in the good ship *Ohio*, specially committed to the care of John Gravesend, and as seasick and homesick a lad as ever smelt brine.

John Gravesend had, as hath been shown, no "folks." Once, in his love-lorn life, he had taken to his starving heart a white Angora cat. This creature, instinct with feline beauty, had proved most unsatisfactory in temper, and, having consequently become obnoxious to an entire ship's crew, had finally been despatched at the hand of an ireful cook. A family of seven white mice had succeeded this unamiable *protégé*. These tiny cannibals had also disappointed the hopes of their patron, a general home-consumption having eventually left, in the once populous cage, but a single inhabitant. The survivor, ultimately becoming as hipped as the poet's "Last Man," fell a prey to melancholy in lieu of mice. After the above abortive efforts, John Gravesend foreswore pets; but here, now, was this poor greenhorn, Ferguson, a likely lad, and consigned to his tenderest

care. Why, to love *him* would be "worth while." And when, during their first week out, on that wild, windy night in Jack's watch below, the boy, fevered and seasick, mistook his sailor nurse, with those clumsily tender ways, for his own fond mother, and, throwing his young arms about the watcher's burly neck, begged him never, never, to forget him, Jack made a strong, silent vow that he never would. Alas, he never *did*, for that was his bitter destiny, never, *never* to forget Will Ferguson! This ailing spell well past, the lad mended steadily, and was, ere long, able to be on deck and on duty. Glad days these were for John Gravesend, and still gladder nights; for now, the boy sharing his watch on deck, the pair might, night after night, listen to the sea-song at the *Ohio's* keel, watch the moonlight silvering the crested deep, or, in that other deep above them, might trace the splendid constellations glittering clear and far; Jack, meantime, spinning for Will bewitching sea-yarns, fraught with the simple charm of that every-day knowledge which is the fruit of experience, while Will (who was a bookish lad) might, in his turn, impart to the unread sailor that other knowledge which is

the fruit of study. And thus it befell that, ere the *Ohio* had made a third of her long voyage, this man and boy were bound heart to heart, with a two-fold cord of love, pure and passionless, yet "passing the love of woman."

For Gravesend, this was, indeed, a gracious time. No more craving for human tenderness, less thirst for that tempting poison, which had lured his unguarded sense in the old, cabin-boy days, when the busy steward had unwisely permitted him to drain the spirit-glasses. The pernicious taste thus engendered in the child had, alas! grown with his growth, and, at times, had even overmastered the strong man. In Samson's might, as we are told, there was but a single flaw; yet, *there*, Delilah found him weak as the weakest. So it was with our sailor, and hence, at irregular intervals, there were decidedly black days in the otherwise clean life of John Gravesend.

The *Ohio*, bound for China, in due time cast anchor at Canton. Jack and Will had got leave to go ashore together. And there it was that John Gravesend's demon took possession of him. Through all that long afternoon of drunken riot, Will (sorely astonished

and dismayed) never once left this frenzied creature. And when Jack had run his mad muck, and, laboriously piloted back to the ship, had at last been persuaded to get into his berth, where he lay, safe, but brutish and insensate, the lad cast himself wearily upon the cabin floor and had a good long, sobbing cry — like the child that he was — the single-hearted, loving child, whose faith in a human soul had been rudely shocked and shaken. On the morrow, Jack was himself again. A trifle dull and heavy-eyed, yet the same old, kind, and sober fellow. That night in their watch the friends talked it all over. Jack retained no distinct consciousness of yesterday's wild doings. After drinking more heavily than he meant, or ought, he had fancied that the crowd had set upon him, and, with spinning head, he had rushed incontinently upon the *crowd;* and knew no more until he awoke next morning in his own snug berth, with Will yet sleeping wearily upon the hard floor. And now, with Ferguson's hand in his own warm clasp, Gravesend vowed no more to touch, taste, or handle, the unclean thing; and, through all that perilous fortnight in port, he never once broke his vow.

Again the *Ohio* cast anchor. It was in Boston Harbor, and on a May-day evening. Will Ferguson and John Gravesend went ashore together. The month had, this year, come smiling in, and juvenile Boston had paraded in muslin and greenery to its heart's content. Upon the Common, there still lingered a breath of the May-day festivitiy. A balmy south wind stirred among the new-leaved trees,— a delicious murmuring wind, prophesying violets, jonquils, and endless forthcoming spring delights.

On such bewitching, yet enervating nights, riotous young blood leaps hotly through quickened pulses, and, for the hour, to live in the sweet, sensuous present is enough; the soul craves no higher good. Will Ferguson, thus far, had developed no taste for that reckless youthful procedure, apologetically termed "the sowing of wild oats."

A long sea voyage, and its consequent social limitations, had, however, quickened in the boy a legitimate youthful craving for fun and frolic, and, what with the witchery of this May night, the coming to port, the rapturous thought of home, mother, and that glad greeting of pretty Kate Benson to-morrow at Spring-

field, he was, as he laughingly averred, "chock full of happiness, and on hand for any sort of a lark." In the heyday of the hour he had not all forgotten that black day at Canton, and had, within himself, resolved to "hold on hard whenever he smelt mischief for Jack."

Sauntering idly into North Street, the pair were abruptly brought to a stand by the gay twang of a violin. "A fiddle; and a waltz!" This set Will's merry feet going; and while he shuffled, boy-fashion, on the sidewalk, a smiling personage, issuing from the door of a certain edifice having over its entrance the sprightly designation of "Dance House," with an "Hullo, there, my hearties!" begged them "Come in a while, and see the fun."

Now, Jack Gravesend was quite aware that in a dance-house "the fun" is of a questionable character. That within it is "the way to hell going down to the chambers of death," and, being a man of clean kernel, he had no lascivious affinity with a dance-house; but here was Will eagerly curious. He liked to humour the lad; and (truth must be told) he, himself, on this May night, was somewhat morally unbraced. Thus it was that, lured on by the merry music, and the cordial solici-

tations of the doorway panderer, the two crossed the threshhold of this evil place. Bacchus, be it known (no less than Venus and Terpsichore), presides over the festivities of the dance-house, and Will Ferguson, soon weary of the "fun," which was in no wise to his liking, found, to his dismay, that Jack Gravesend was weakly succumbing to the fascinations of the "Jolly God." Unable to coax him from the place, he lingered on, inwardly bemoaning his own inquisitive folly; yet resolved, let what would come, to see Jack well out of the scrape. It was not in John Gravesend's nature to do a thing by halves. Whatsoever he did, was done heartily, and mightily; and, having determined to drink, he *drank*, until — ah, well! the bestial orgies of a Circean herd are not things for description, albeit they are nightly enacted in the dance-houses of our own metropolis.

It was broad day. Jack Gravesend awoke. He rubbed his eyes, and looked curiously about him. Where was he? Strange! He couldn't have turned in *here*. He got up, and shook himself wide awake. Two villanous-looking men, having risen from two neighbouring beds, were doing likewise. "Hullo,

shipmates!" said Jack, now fairly on his feet; "lend a hand here, and tell me where I am."

The two burglars — for such they were — being well-posted in the leading particulars of his arrest, glanced knowingly at each other, and smirked with sinister significance peculiarly aggravating to Jack, and burglar number one remarked to his associate, "Golly, Bill; he *is* a green one! Wants to know *where he is!* do you twig, Bill? Why, my fine tar, you're in the lock-up, to be sure."

"In the *lock-up!*" said Jack; "and how in thunder *came* I here?"

"*Brung* here, of course," responded his informant, "'t ain't a road folks gin'ally travels on their own account, eh, Bill?" Bill assenting, with a prodigious wink, Jack propounded a third query: "And what the deuce may I be here *for?*"

"*Here* for?" responded the garrulous ruffian. "Thunderin' black job, my cove! Got drunk last night, and *killed* a man!"

"*Killed* a man!" groaned Jack, his eyes dilating, and his flesh creeping with sudden horror. "Killed a *man*! My God! what will Will Ferguson say?"

"Ferguson? Bill — Bill Ferguson," growled the other burglar. "By jiminy, Tom! he wants to know what Bill Ferguson 'll say! Precious *little*, *I'm* thinkin'; he 's about said *his* say! Why, grampus, Bill Ferguson 's the very indentercal chap you 've done for!"

Officer L—— long remembered a cry that woke the echoes of the lock-up on that May morning. It might have been the yell of a hunted thing at bay, the outcry of a mortal in fierce extremity, the despairing wail of a hell-tormented soul.

Turning the key in the lock of No. 17, he hastily entered that apartment. On the floor, face downward, lay a man.

"Cove in a fit," explained the facetious Tom. "Bill, here, jes' let on 'bout the killin', an' he gin a howl an' went off in a jiffy."

Officer L—— was humane. Good men, thank God! fill many of these humble places of authority. Silencing the bold ruffian, he bade the pair help raise the senseless form and adjust it on the rude cot. This done, he smoothed the tossed hair, wiped the foam from the purple lips, and chafed the great brown hands as helpfully as if they had been little "May's," the dear sick lamb of his own

pretty flock. At length, the convulsive throes ceased, and consciousness returned to the stricken man.

Like some dim-remembered dream, the curt, cruel words of the burglar recalled themselves to Gravesend's bewildered brain. One look into the kindly face of the officer reassured him. Feebly rising to his feet, he sank upon his trembling knees, and prayed brokenly to hear it all. He was "all right again, and wanted to know the whole truth. He could bear the *very worst*, and would thank him for it; indeed, sir, he would." The "very worst" was soon told.

There had been, explained the officer, on the previous night, a drunken row at a dance-house on North Street. The prisoner had, unfortunately, been concerned in the affair, and, in the temporary frenzy of intoxication, had drawn his dirk upon a woman. A young man, who had hitherto looked on, taking no part in the *mêlée*, now dashed in to arrest the assailant's hand, and himself received the murderous thrust. The brawlers had been duly arrested, the youth carried to the hospital, where, his wound proving mortal, he had, in half an hour, expired.

On his body a small diary had been found. It was inscribed:

"Willie Ferguson, from his mother.
Springfield, Jan. 1, 18—."

* * * * * * *

Will — Fergus-on, Springfield, — 18— Will — Springfield — from — his — mother. 18 — Will, Willie, Will. Will Ferguson. He had sworn never to forget him. He is keeping his oath! Will — W-i-l-l F-e-r-g-u-s-o-n. There it is; on the walls, on the ceiling, up and down, over and across! Everywhere, everywhere, the *name*, the weary, *weary* name!

He has spelt it, over and over, forward and backward, fast and slow, loud and softly, again and again, till his brain spins; and sparks, like wicked little sprites, dance before his strained eyes, and now, cowering among his pillows, he strives to hide from that terrible pursuing name. "Smothering? they mean to smother him, do they?" He starts from his pillow, and, wild and eager, peers about his chamber. Blood! blood everywhere! The bed-spread is dabbled with it; it trickles down the walls; it lies in clotted pools upon the floor! In the window sits an Angora cat, white, mottled with red; she laps hungrily

from an ever-brimming basin of blood! A knife is hanging yonder. It is a dirk-knife, bright and new. Its handle is lettered. With aching eyes he spells, "J-a-c-k, f-r-o-m W-i-l-l. C-a-n-t-o-n, 18—." Let him but reach that knife and hurl it into the sea! He is bound; he struggles; but cannot get free; and there still is the knife, horribly familiar, with the *name* staring at him from its heft, until every letter becomes a mocking serpent's tongue, hissing over and over in his tormented ear: "Will! Will! Will Ferguson!" He shivers; his brain is on fire; he can no longer look nor listen; he can but moan piteously: "Mercy! mercy! God have mercy!" They are putting a glass to his lips. He is terribly thirsty; and here is no blood; only an innocent saffron-tinged liquid. He drains it with eager lips. He is cooler now. The room grows dusky. He can no longer see that accursed dirk. Somebody had swabbed the floor, and they have unbound him.

A balmy evening wind, just the very idle land whisper that strayed among the leaves that night while he and Will sauntered through Boston Common, wanders in at the open casement. It winnows the hot air, it

breathes upon his fevered brow, "like the benediction that follows after prayer." He sleeps, and, in his dream, is again with Will, and on board the *Ohio*. Becalmed in the Gulf Stream, hard by the lovely "Land of Flowers," lies the huge, idle craft. It is the Sabbath, and the sailors,— idle as the ship,— gathering in lazy groups, have pleasant talk of wives and sweethearts (for they are homeward bound). Will, half-reclined upon a coil of rope, reads aloud from his red pocket Testament. He has chanced upon this passage, from the dream of the Patmos seer: "And them that had gotten the victory . . . stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God." The "victory!" Ah! that is a *hard* thing to get! Shall *he*, John Gravesend, ever hold in his hand a harp of God? While he turns the text over in his mind, looking wistfully far out across the glassy deep, Will silently rises, walks swiftly astern, and, without a farewell word, drops quietly into the sea. He strives to follow. In vain! His limbs are holden in leaden heaviness. Wrestling with this demon of slumber, he at last awakes. Springing to his feet, he searches eagerly the empty, moonlit room. He calls, softly, "Will, Will!"

No answer! He fancies a gentle sigh beneath his window. Will is there, sure enough, waiting for him in the pleasant moonlight. He need but drop softly to the ground to join him. Slight iron bars cross the window; he is strong; he wrenches at them manfully. They yield! They are displaced, and now only this paltry sash and a bit of glass between him and Will! These are soon demolished. The window is low, and, noiselessly dropping into the yard beneath, he calls softly, "Will! Will!" No response. Strange! A moment ago he was there! It is cool and quiet out here beneath the summer moon, and Will cannot be far off, — over that wall, perhaps. He scales it. "Not here? Well, he will run on a bit, and come up with him." And run on he does. On and on, through that long summer night. Across dewy-scented garden-plots, over trim cut lawns, whose tender grass is as velvet to his bare, fleeting feet. Through moist, wide meadows, and across low, babbling brooks, till, at last, he is upon the long, white road. Fleet as a hound upon the flying scent, pausing but to listen, and whisper, huskily, to the heedless night, "Will! Will! Will!" he hur-

ries on. A half-clad, phantom-like form, breathlessly pursuing a phantom. The moon sets. The stars are paling in the still, sweet dawn, when, in the purlieu of a tangled wood, pale and spent, foam gathering on his lips, blood trickling from his torn feet, he pauses; and, tottering feebly into an odorous covert of blossoming underwood, falls prone upon the earth. An angel, with broad and kindly wing, the gentlest of all God's ministering host, descends to brood tenderly this desolate creature, — *Sleep*, messenger of peace, forerunner of that eternal quietude that somewhere stays for all earth's life-worn children!

On the ensuing morning, sensation craving readers of the Boston *Morning Chronicle* read, with characteristic relish, the following:

"GREAT EXCITEMENT!!!

"A Murderer Pretends Insanity and Escapes!"

"The citizens of Taunton and its vicinity were this morning startled by tidings of the escape of a patient from our State Lunatic Hospital. The man was entered, for treatment, from Charles Street Jail, and his name is John Gravesend.

"Our readers will, no doubt, recall him to memory as the abandoned wretch who, not long since, was arrested in this city for the murder of young Fergu-

son, a mere lad, whom he enticed into one of the North Street dens, and there, after robbing his victim of a large sum of money, butchered the ill-fated boy. The mother of Ferguson, as will be remembered, died soon after of a broken heart. While awaiting the award of his crime, Gravesend — having successfully feigned insanity — was consigned to the State asylum. On the night of the 15th, the asylum watchman making his round at ten o'clock, found Gravesend, as he supposed, in a sound sleep. At two, the rascal was gone. Being a man of great muscular power, he had displaced the grating of his window, and thus made good his escape. The wretch has been tracked for several miles, and we are informed that two efficient detectives, assisted by hospital *employés*, are now in full pursuit. Other outrages are imputed to this daring villain, and it is hinted that he is concerned in a certain mysterious murder, that yet thrills our community with horror. Great alarm prevails in the vicinity, and it is hoped that the fugitive will be speedily secured."

This "bloodthirsty" monster was, on the afternoon succeeding his escape, found slumbering as placidly as the leaf-strewn "Babes in the Wood," in that flowery covert to which we have already tracked him.

From this long trance-like slumber — the crisis of his mental malady — John Gravesend awoke, with strained, aching limbs, and brain yet hazy from delirium. Restored to the

asylum and treated for his malady, he gradually returned from that labyrinthian world in which, for more than two months, his mind had wearily wandered.

Mind and body in their normal condition, he was remanded to jail, and subsequently arraigned for the wilful destruction of a life dearer to him than his own. Pleading guilty, and legally condemned for manslaughter, he was sentenced to confinement for life in the State Prison. Unmoved, he hears the terrible mandate that dooms him to life-long banishment from God's wide, beautiful world. With him, the fatal Rubicon is already passed. He has slain the belovèd one. Life holds in reserve no heavier woe; and death has not in store a pang more terrible.

A BUNCH OF VIOLETS

A BUNCH OF VIOLETS.

"THERE'S Neilson, takin' his afternoon walk," said the good-natured turnkey, making a casual survey of the prison yard from the grated window near the guard-room door, which he was about to open for my exit. Neilson! and in the yard? At last, I must encounter that bad man! I was, be it known, on my way to the prison hospital, carrying a basket of Parma violets for distribution among a score or so of my fellow-sinners, now stretched upon hard beds, or wearily sitting on harder chairs, in that mildly penal department of the institution; and, no doubt, not eminently deserving of agreeable sniffs at Parma violets. At this unlooked-for announcement of the turnkey, a cold shiver ran down my back, for Neilson, even in prison circles, was accounted a desperate man. He was both robber and murderer; and for the

last fifteen years had been serving out a life sentence of solitary confinement in one of the dreary cells of the "Upper Arch."

Five of these awful years had he passed in uninterrupted solitude, but, since the advent of the present humane prison warden, Neilson had been permitted to take, daily, an hour's exercise in the prison yard, a sunny enclosure, opening on the workshops, the hospital wing, and indirectly on the "Upper Arch." In the centre of this court, "the new warden" had caused a cheery flower plot to be made, and now, in April, many-hued crocuses already brightened its borders.

It was just before the establishment of the beautiful and helpful Flower Mission that I undertook, not without some discouragement, to try the gracious effect of violets, roses, pinks, and heartsease, behind the bars. In my *then* limited experience, to be locked out of the friendly guard-room, and sent alone across the prison yard, had not been agreeable to me; and, in deference to my groundless fears, an officer had been detailed to accompany me from the main prison to the hospital wing. As the years went on, my social popularity in the State Prison became well as-

sured, and some surprise at this needless precaution was expressed to me by the convicts; and one attached prison friend (a highway robber) had even assured me that "if anybody in that prison should lay a finger on me, he 'd be torn to pieces by the men, afore you could say Jack Robinson."

Though scarcely convinced that the entire demolition of a fellow-being would indemnify me for such "scaith and scart" as might in the *mêlée* accrue to my own poor person, it was on this assurance that I decided to dispense with official escort to the wing. Thus far, my visits had been so happily timed that the dreaded "Solitary" had never once crossed my path. Looking anxiously from the window, I made a hasty survey of the yard. An officer was just stepping from the door of a distant workshop. Two or three convicts were, at various points of observation, shuffling across the yard. Well, it was too late to show the white feather. The turnkey had already unlocked the door, and stood waiting. I handed him a tiny nosegay (the good man adored flowers, and I never omitted this pretty "Sop to Cerberus"); and now, grasping tightly the handle of my flower basket, "with my heart

in my mouth," I thanked him as he held back the heavy door for me, and passed trembling out.

With a hard iron clang, the door closed behind me. Descending a roomy flight of steps, I found myself in the prison yard, and, at the same moment, confronted by, — yes, it must be that dreadful fellow, Neilson, himself! And a sinister-visaged wretch he was, with his small, ferrety eyes, his coarse mouth, and heavy chin. He shuffled as he went, and, with an evil look, stared boldly in my face.

"A tough subject," I mentally determined; but "total depravity" is not an article of my creed, and I *do* believe in humanity. In a moment, I had dismissed all fear of Neilson, in my zeal for his reformation, and, stepping up to him with a friendly good-afternoon, into which I insinuated all the approval I could conscientiously bestow upon so forbidding a creature, I handed him, from my basket, a bunch of violets. He took them, and, with a clumsy nod, but not a word of thanks, passed on, leaving me with a lightened heart. And, now, I stopped a moment to exchange civilities with the officer whom I had descried from the guard-room window. We were fast friends,

and I was indebted to him for many a kind turn. He glanced disparagingly at my flowers, and, as a relief to my chagrin, I said, "Well, I have just given Neilson a bunch of violets; do you imagine that he cares at all for them?"

"Neilson?" he questioned, in evident perplexity.

"Yes, Neilson," I replied, "that short, stout man yonder, there he is *now!* going into that door!"

"Bless your heart, my good lady," exclaimed the officer, "that ain't Neilson! There *he* is; can't you see him, the tall fellow with his nose in the air, standing there by the crocus bed? If there's any flowers in the yard, Neilson's about sure to fetch up near 'em."

"Is he?" I said; and from that moment "a fellow-feeling made me kind." I felt sure of the ultimate good-will of Neilson. Meantime, having exhausted the attraction of the crocus bed, he was moving in my direction, but so slowly that I had time to make a critical survey of this famous personage, — a grave, quiet man of slender but firm build, and, even in his coarse prison uniform, bearing himself with a certain air of (if I may so express it) scholarly elegance.

Suitably clothed, he might have been taken for a clergyman, or a Harvard professor. Selecting the very choicest nosegay from my basket, I bade him, as we met, a cheerful good-afternoon, and, offering the flowers, said timidly (for I found this grave, lordly being somewhat unapproachable), "Would you like a bunch of violets to-day?" Absorbed in his own reflections, he had not, until now, observed me. He stopped, came out of his reverie, and, lifting his worn prison cap with a highly ceremonious bow, took the flowers from my hand, composedly smelt them, and said, slowly: "Thank you, madam, they *would* be very refreshing." Though Neilson's demeanour was eminently stoical, his face was pitiably wan and thin, and in his faded blue eye there was a world of patient pathos that went straight to my heart.

As he was about to pass on, I detained him for a moment, and said, eagerly, "If you like flowers — if you — if you think they would *help* you, I might bring you a few every Monday, as I come to the hospital."

"Flowers," he replied sententiously, "*are* refreshing; and if it will not be putting you to too much inconvenience, madam, I would

be glad to receive a few from you every week." After this it was arranged with the obliging guard-room turnkey, that every Monday afternoon, along with his own buttonhole posy, a bouquet of "seasonable flowers" should be left on his desk, and should be sent by him to Neilson's cell. And, moreover, ascertaining that Neilson had no "visitor," I obtained permission of the warden to put his name on my visiting list, among those of some forty other unvisited convicts, who, in lieu of dearer company, received *me* once in three months, in the big guard-room. On these occasions, I was allowed to bring my sorry acquaintances flowers, fruit, drawing and writing materials, books, tracts and magazines, together with such sound moral advice as could be, — like the "sheep in the Vicar's family picture," — "thrown in for nothing." In their turn, my friends confided to me such passages in their lives as might properly be told to a lady; acquainted me with their desires and aspirations, and, almost invariably, craved my intercession with the governor. (For, whatever his crime, each prison convict hopes that, with some friendly go-between to present his case, that mild-hearted executive

will promptly "pardon him out.") But of this service I was conscientiously chary. Gladly it was, however, that I undertook the sale of such inlaid boxes, photograph frames, and other articles as the men found time and material to fashion, the proceeds of which enabled them to subscribe for "Harper's," to own a book or two, or, better still, to make an occasional remittance to some dependent mother, wife or child, left in want by their own wicked folly. Of all the convicts on my list, none proved more satisfactory than Neilson. Our conversation, carried on, according to the prison rules, within earshot of an officer, related chiefly to literature; for this sometime robber and murderer was a man of no mean intellect; and his mental energies, now necessarily diverted from more deplorable channels, had, in these years of solitary leisure, been so well applied to self-improvement, that from almost utter ignorance he had come to be, after his own fashion, an educated man.

Before his last sentence (as he told me) he had been scarcely able to read, and could not even write his name. During his residence in the "Upper Arch," he had, single-handed,

mastered reading and writing, and had made fair headway in grammar, geography, arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, and various other branches of education. For general reading he had a decided relish, and a correct appreciation of literary excellence. Fiction he held in supreme contempt, and could have had but a slight acquaintance with it, as he assured me that, in his whole life (he was now fifty years old), he had read but a single story, "The Vicar of Wakefield." As the prison library could not always supply Neilson's favourite mental food, I undertook to furnish him with such reading as he lacked; and his careful use, and prompt return of a book, with his fine appreciation of its contents, made this work a pleasure.

Neilson's story, part of which I had from his own lips and the remainder from the warden himself, runs thus:

An Englishman, born in a London slum, and growing up, as any ill weed must, at haphazard, he had, even in his first trousers, gravitated naturally to crime. A childhood of vagrancy and petty thieving ill-passed, in his early manhood he became a professional house-breaker. He had been made ac-

quainted with many of the prisons of his native country, and had twice made his escape from "durance vile," when he was transported to Botany Bay, from whence he also escaped, along with another notorious burglar and robber, who had been his partner in the crime, for which they had both been expatriated.

On regaining their liberty, the pair had come to this country, and, in Boston, had together undertaken the robbery of a bank. For this crime, they were duly convicted, and sentenced to seven years in the State Prison. Before the removal from jail to prison, one of them managed to escape. The other, Neilson, had divided his booty with his accomplice. Neilson was the soul of honour, that very questionable honour, which, according to the adage, *may* exist among thieves, and, though he obligingly informed the officers of the "bank," where *his* share of the plunder was buried (which they recovered), and, in a subsequent interview with them in prison, slipped off his shoe, and took from his stocking, and further restored to them, a sum of about seven hundred dollars, which he had retained as pocket-money, and thus

ingeniously smuggled into prison, neither entreaty nor bribe could induce him to reveal anything in regard to the plunder of his accomplice.

It was affirmed of Neilson that, in the bad days above referred to, he never countenanced violence, but carried on his profession, for the most part, without personal injury to his victims, accomplishing his ends rather by strategy, than by brutality. And yet, strange as it was, this very man, on one fatal morning, — and, oddly enough, it was that of the very day when his sentence for the bank robbery had expired, and within a few hours he would have been discharged from the prison,— as the convicts were marching in file from the prison to the workshop, made a brutal and fatal attack upon an unoffending fellow convict. Reaching over the shoulder of the man next him in the ranks, he stabbed the unfortunate prisoner in the neck, with a shoe-knife, severing the jugular vein, and causing immediate death. There was no quarrel between the two, and no cause could be assigned for the murder, for which Neilson was, in due time, tried, convicted, and sentenced to be hanged.

All the arrangements for carrying out the sentence had been made, the gallows erected, the rope in its place, and the chaplain rendering the last service of his office, when a reprieve for thirty days was received from the governor.

On consideration, it was believed that Neilson must have been labouring under temporary insanity, and, as he was known to be a man of pacific character, and could assign no cause for the attack, though he had never shown *other* symptoms of mental disturbance, he was given the benefit of a doubt, and his sentence commuted to solitary imprisonment for life. Thus he escaped the grave, only to be consigned to a living tomb. At the time of our first acquaintance, Neilson, all told, had been about twenty years in the ——— State Prison. For the first years of his sentence, he was not once permitted to leave his cell, and but for the praiseworthy humanity of the new warden, he would never again have seen the sun.

The cells of the "Upper Arch" are not, like those in general use, on exhibition; but, one day, in consideration of my having never abused the privileges granted me by the

authorities of the ——— State Prison, I was kindly permitted to visit Neilson in his own apartment.

Following my guide, I passed through a damp, narrow corridor, gloomy to oppressiveness, and lined with grim iron doors, each stoutly secured with bar and padlock. Many of these cells are temporarily inhabited by refractory prisoners, and, as I went, a discordant chorus of groans, yells, and oaths, mingled with the dissonance of maniacal mirth from some ill-balanced wretch, gone mad in this horrible solitude, saluted my unwilling ear. On the extreme end of the doleful corridor, a narrow, cobwebbed window shed its feeble light. Pausing at the left-hand corner cell, my conductor fitted his key to the padlock, turned it, removed the heavy bar, and, throwing back the door, ushered me into Neilson's presence.

I found the cell somewhat larger than the ordinary private compartment of the prison, but indescribably damp, fetid, and dismal. A narrow loophole, glazed, grated and "hermetically sealed," admitted a dim glimmer of day. A small aperture, or wicket, near the bottom of its door, and evidently made for

the double purpose of admitting air and food, was now tightly closed.

For furniture, the place contained a rude bed, with mattress of straw, grimy sheets, and a meagre allowance of coarse gray blankets, with a pillow of husks, or straw, a rough table of pine, a shelf for books, and a stool. On the table stood a rusty tin cup, a bottle of vinegar, a pepper-box, and a cup of dingy salt. It also held two iron spoons, a horn-handled knife and fork, and a Bible. The shelf was well filled with books, and among them stood a glass pickle jar, now sacred to Neilson's bouquets, and still holding a few withered flowers.

Neilson, himself, was half reclined upon his bed, and intent upon a book. As I entered, he arose in some confusion. A call, with Neilson, was scarce a possible occurrence. His composure, however, was soon regained, and, bowing ceremoniously, he bade me good-day, and, with cordial dignity, did the honours of his cell.

He exhibited, with pride, his small library, and called my especial attention to the excellence of the shelf, which he had made for his precious volumes, about fifteen or twenty in

number. I had brought Neilson a modicum of that June, whose sunshine comes alike for God's good and evil children, in the shape of a great bunch of damask roses. Filling his jar from the rusty tin cup, he arranged them with tender care, and their grateful odour soon pervaded this dreary place. A box of ripe, red strawberries June had also, on this occasion, donated to her indifferent pensioner; and now, glad to leave behind me even this poor bit of summer, I took a last sad survey of the sorry place, and bade Neilson adieu. As I went gratefully back to God's daylight, musing upon the man and his dismal, lifelong abode, it seemed no wonder that, moping for fifteen years in this cheerless cell, his brain should, at times, have succumbed to the horrors of the situation, for the warden had told me that sometimes Neilson "went out of his head." It was then that, pursued by the avenging shade of "Morris," the man whom he had murdered, his shrieks aroused the night patrol, who must call the warden from his bed, to lay the poor phantom, as Neilson fancied that the warden — and *only he* — could.

For six kindly years, it was permitted me

to make life a little less dreary for Neilson, and to exhort him to bear with becoming fortitude the long penance justly accorded him, and, in my blundering, imperfect way, to suggest to him *divine* compassion by my *own*.

Though undoubtedly of plebeian parentage, some tiny runlet of gentle blood must have found its indirect way to Neilson's cockney veins. Never once, in all our intercourse, did he shock me by a coarse expression, or an ill-bred action. In his choice of words he was even finical, and his taste in the arrangement of flowers could scarcely have been impeached by the most fastidious person. He had, invariably, the bearing and instincts of a gentleman. His dietetic predilections, I grieve to record, were sometimes inelegant. Though eminently reticent in regard to his wants, he had made bold to solicit a bit of cheese as an accompaniment to the mince pie which on each State holiday (the legal pie-time in the prison) I gladly provided for him, and I was instructed that the *stronger* the cheese was, the better. He also preferred raw onions to Bartlett pears, and many a little basket of that pungent vegetable have I con-

veyed to him, to the sore disquiet of my own vexed olfactories. Pepper-grass, artichokes, and raw turnips, he held in high esteem.

Ordinarily peaceful and placid, Neilson could, at times, be aroused to extreme anger; and I well remember his furious protest against the prison chaplain, when that worthy had confiscated a work of James Freeman Clarke's, which he found in the possession of a theologically-minded convict, on the ground that it was "an infidel book," and improper reading for the prison.

As the slow years went on with Neilson, he became, gradually, a broken-down man. The "Arch" had well done its destructive work, and, about five years after I made his acquaintance, he was forever removed from its deleterious atmosphere, and permanently quartered in the prison hospital, where, in common with his fellow patients, he enjoyed all the legal immunities accorded to the invalid prisoner.

He could now get space for his cramped limbs, had some fellowship, *sub rosa*, with his kind, and leave to sun himself in the yard *ad libitum*. Poor Neilson! this comparative freedom had come too late. He was now far

gone in consumption, had Bright's disease, and the doctor had also discovered some serious disturbance with his heart. His brain, too, shared in this breaking up, and he had now abandoned reading, and employed his leisure, when free from pain, in dainty wood-carving or inlaying. His work, often fantastic in design, was always exquisite in finish, and sometimes absurdly elaborate where elaboration was quite unnecessary (for with Neilson, "the gods saw everywhere)." Hours of patient labour were devoted to the finish of the "unseen."

The unanimous good-will of instructors in the prison shops made the daintiest materials easily attainable to the poor fellow, and his ivory charms, his mother-of-pearl crosses, and inlaid satin-wood boxes, found, outside the prison, a ready market, and a price which enabled him, probably for the first time in his whole life, to become the possessor of money honestly earned. In the hospital it was that Neilson evolved, with fanciful ingenuity, for my poor self, the most remarkable of ink-stands. The design embraced a camel standing on a platform wreathed with carven forget-me-nots, and inscribed with a Latin

motto, having some enigmatical reference to the foresighted habit of the creature. Unfortunately, the platform, the camel, with his two humps, the motto, and the forget-me-nots, made so large a figure in Neilson's design, that its main feature, the inkstand, had, virtually, to be omitted; and could only be hinted at by a shallow vessel, holding about one good thimbleful, and perched perilously upon the camel's irregular back. From time to time I was permitted to watch the progress of this remarkable creation, and was called upon for a pictured camel and some real forget-me-nots, as models.

The somewhat crotchety custodian of the hospital, from day to day, contemptuously taking note of the advancement of my inkstand, on its final completion grimly assured me that, "If Neilson had been paid by the day for his labour on *that thing*, it would have cost about two hundred dollars!" Poor, patient fellow, it was almost his last work! He had now become too weak to crawl down the hospital stairs for his daily sun-bath. And by and by his seat in the saloon, where the men, who were able to be about, gathered on Mondays to listen to my reading, was empty. He

lay now on his cot informally clad in a faded print shirt and patched trousers, both of which he wore with a dignity peculiarly his own. His head was adorned with a towering cotton night-cap. Whatever else he might lack, Neilson always stood out firmly for a nightcap. It was to him a sort of insignia of respectability. To his last hour he never for a moment lost that superiority of mien which distinguished him even amid the coarse and degrading surroundings of a prison. At the last he suffered great pain, but, as the end approached, his mind became wonderfully clear, and he listened intelligently to reading, and enjoyed conversation.

He gave little trouble to his attendants, detailed from among his fellow convicts to nurse him by day, or to watch with him at night, and, to the hour of his death, he was stoically patient.

It was to be feared that, in the bewilderment of his final moments, the shade of the murdered "Morris" might again torture him. On the day preceding his death, after reading from his prayer-book the services for the sick and dying, I sat painfully watching his laborious breathing, as he lay propped high with pillows;

and with an expression of solemn expectancy on his awed face. From time to time a spasm of pain contracted his brow, already damp with the dew of death. I wiped tenderly his moist forehead, put a spoonful of water between his poor lips, and, still mindful of the avenger, "Morris," stooped to his ear, and whispered reassuringly, "You 're not at all afraid, *are* you, Neilson." He opened wide his eyes, and, with a half-reproachful glance, replied, distinctly, "Afraid! afraid of *God!* Ah, madam, I wish I were *with* Him now!" That night Neilson's prayer was answered. With mighty throes (for he was originally a man of iron constitution, all his forebears, as he told me, having outlived their ninetieth year) his spirit was loosed from the body of its sin and suffering, to return to God who gave it.

Neilson's obsequies were attended with a ceremony unusual in the prison, where burials are, for the most part, but slight occasions, and, in certain exigencies, *have* taken place without even the grace of a prayer from the chaplain.

This funeral was honoured by the attendance of both warden and chaplain. Some thirty men from the shops had obtained per-

mission to be present. One or two instructors and officers of "low degree" were also there, and I, too, had been invited. The chaplain gave a slight sketch of Neilson's prison life, winding up with some words of exhortation for the benefit of the convicts. The warden made a simple and kindly address. A prayer was offered, after which the men, with uncovered heads, filed reverently to the coffin's side for a last look at the tranquil white face of their comrade, and then, with sobered mien, and attended by their officers, left the hospital. While the warden and chaplain made some final arrangement with the hospital officer, I lingered by the coffin to place a bunch of fresh violets in Neilson's listless hand; then, bidding him a mute farewell, followed, with a slow step and a saddened heart, the warden and chaplain; and we passed together into the great guard-room.

As I stood, with tearful eyes, waiting for the turnkey to let me out of the prison, the warden came to my side. "Well, Neilson is gone," he said, gravely. "He was an old resident, and will be missed in the prison; and, by the by, let me tell you that you are an heiress! Neilson made his will, and com-

mitted it to my care. All his little savings, thirty dollars, he has bequeathed to you. Poor fellow," he continued, "no doubt in his day he 's done his share of harm, but, whatever he was, Neilson knew his *friends*."

One's first legacy, be it ever so small, is an event and often a surprise. Never before had my humble name been recorded in a will. I was not long, however, in determining the disposal of Neilson's pathetic request. It should be devoted to the erection of a simple stone to mark his last resting-place.

In common with all the unclaimed dead of the prison, he was carried to Tewksbury for interment in the pauper burying-ground.

At my request, the warden kindly wrote to the authorities there, asking them to designate the burial spot of Neilson, that I might be enabled to carry out my resolution. No reply having been vouchsafed, in my discouragement, I betook myself to the "Board of State Charities" for information in regard to Neilson's missing remains. Some inquiries into the matter were, I believe, made by that institution, but so indifferently were they pursued that nothing came of it, and I was finally compelled to the sad supposition that

Neilson had been denied that last cheap boon which even the poorest may claim of earth — a grave; and his legacy was, accordingly, consecrated to the procurement of fruit for the convict patients in hospital; and, perhaps, this disposition of his little savings would not have seemed unfitting to the poor fellow himself, had it been possible to consult him on this occasion.

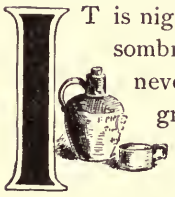
All this happened twenty years ago; and no light having yet been thrown on the mysterious disappearance of Neilson's mortal part, it is reasonable to infer that it was long since dismembered in the interest of science; or, that, still partially intact, it now hangs fleshless and dishonored in some doctor's "skeleton closet."

From these gruesome conclusions one gladly takes refuge in the inspiriting hope that Neilson *himself* still lives; and that, in some phase of existence beyond the ken of our meagre psychology, his moral evolution now goes uninterruptedly on.

> "For yet we trust that somehow good
> Will be the final goal of ill,
> To pangs of nature, sins of will,
> Defects of doubt, and taints of blood."

A DISASTROUS SLEIGH-RIDE

A DISASTROUS SLEIGH-RIDE.



IT is nightfall in the prison. In these sombre precincts where day is never fairly admitted, night falls grimly, as if the entire procedure were, at best, but a poor bit of irony. The convicts are safe in their unsavoury lodging-rooms. In the chilly corridors, light feebly struggles with the surrounding gloom; and the cells are half in shadow; yet, here and there, an unquiet figure may be discerned, pacing its irksome bounds with short, sharp turns, or standing moodily at its grated door; an unknown outcast; a unit in an aggregate of sin-wrecked humanity; yet (as God knows) endowed with a heart akin to our own, — a heart that can ache, repent, endure, and break!

In the deserted guard-room silence reigns.

The night turnkey is seated in his place. His bowed head gradually inclines toward his ample chest, and presently, losing its poise, is righted with an abrupt jerk. Rubbing his eyes, he makes a drowsy attempt at official scrutiny, and sinks supinely into untroubled slumber. Meantime, yonder, in the "North Wing," a sly whispering goes undisturbedly on.

Pat Doniver, the prison runner, whose hour of dismissal has not yet come, is, informally, interviewing his fellow-convicts. To all intents and purposes Pat is innocently resting upon a pine stool, subject to official order, and upon the very brink of falling asleep. Truth, however, compels the severe statement that, between Mr. Doniver's doing and his seeming, there is often a lamentable discrepancy; but, to get at the "true inwardness" of Pat, one must hear the story of that magnificent sleigh-ride, which, quite contrary to his intention, ultimately landed him in the State Prison.

Pat Doniver is an Irishman, although — as he will tell you — "not born in his own native counthry; but narrowly escapin' that same," having been prematurely hustled upon

the stage of life in the crowded steerage of an Atlantic steamer bound for Boston, and not yet fairly out of sight of Albion's chalky cliffs.

In form, Pat is lithe and trim; in face, a very Hibernian Apollo — if one may conceive an Apollo with a nose decidedly tip-tilted. All the same, Pat's facial development is good. His mouth is finely cut, with odd little smiles forever dimpling its handsome corners. His eyes are coal black, his hair ditto; and such curls! They are Pat's special weakness — the darlings of his heart! And it is known among the prison officers that Pat, having been bidden to submit these cherished raven wings to the initiatory prison shearing, had stoutly refused compliance to the "Powers that be;" and had actually endured the horrors of a three days' "Solitary" in defence of the inalienable right of an Irish-American citizen to the peaceful possession of his own hair!

In repose, Pat's visage has that air of demure mischief which lurks in the visage of a frolicsome kitten, dozing, with one eye open, in the sunshine. This is Pat's story; and looking into prison life, you will find it no uncommon one.

City-born, his juvenile days seem to have alternated unequally between chores and school, and to have exhibited long and frequent intervals of utter vagrancy. At twelve, he lost his mother (his father is a being entirely outside his knowledge), and, scrambling up to early manhood, as best he could, he finally rose to the dignity of a hack driver. Subsequently, Pat became an expert tippler. The two pursuits (as one must often have observed) do not in the least antagonize. Thus it eventually came to pass that, with Pat, to be tipsy was the general rule; to be sober, the rare exception. It was after the great snow-fall of 18—, that our hero resolved to "trate himself" to a sleigh-ride. Sleigh-rides, in *his* line, were, to be sure, every-day occurrences, but this, as he explained, in his own rich brogue, was to be "a good social time, all aloon be meself."

To this end (temporarily entrusting his hack to a friendly fellow Jehu) Mr. Doniver hired a fine horse and cutter, and, with the same, "to kape himself warrum," a big buffalo robe. Thus amply equipped, and having his pockets well lined with small coin, Pat set merrily forth. The day was bitterly cold, the

drinks delightfully warm, and, somehow, he took by the way more refreshment than he had, at the outset, counted on. Indeed, if truth must be told, at an early period in this jolly excursion Pat had reached that complex mental condition in which to count *at all* is a most difficult matter, and, as the day wore on, — save a confused consciousness of more drinks in sundry bars than cash in a certain pocket, — Pat altogether lost his reckoning. In this awkward dilemma, it naturally occurred to our thirsty excursionist to dispose of certain marketable personal effects immediately at hand. Having at various halting-places drunk out his big silver watch, a huge pencil of the same salable metal, his new red silk bandanna, his pocketbook and pocket-comb, a smart new necktie, bought expressly for this superb occasion, and, last of all, his drab, many-caped overcoat, it now became obvious to his mind that, in the increasing warmth of temperature, — consequent upon infinite potations, — a buffalo robe was but the merest of superfluities. Having arrived at this stoical conclusion, Pat, thereafter, retains but a confused recollection of this disastrous excursion. "An obleegin'

gintlemun," as he remembers, had the goodness to exchange whiskey for wild buffaloes, which he, Pat, proposed to hunt and drive hither in countless herds. Pat awoke the next morning, to find himself in the lock-up, charged with drunkenness and the theft of a buffalo robe.

The smart cutter, with its unconscious occupant, had been obligingly delivered by the fagged but sagacious steed to its proprietor, who, minus his buffalo robe, had, in turn, delivered Pat to the police.

On this count, deposited in jail, Patrick passed the sorry interval between commitment and trial in fighting the blue devils, whose onsets, at this advanced stage of alcoholic excess, were not, as one may imagine, few or far between.

Pat had, however, a genuine Irish constitution, and no lack of Irish combativeness. And, unaided and alone, he grappled vigourously with the fierce devils of delirium tremens, and, had he *not* worsted them, unaided and alone, he would probably have perished. Destiny, however, having better (and also *worse*) things in store for Mr. Doniver, he did, at last, worst them, and, when the day

for his trial came, he was — for once in his adult existence — austerely sober.

And now it would not have gone hard with the fellow, since this petty larceny might have been expiated by a short term in the House of Correction, had not one of those mischievous birds who carry tales whispered in court that Pat Doniver was a notorious drunkard.

"Inebriation," severely remarked the judge to the counsel on his left, whose breath exhaled an unmistakable odour of brandy, "inebriation, sir, is becoming rampant in our community, and I shall find it my duty to make of the case before me an impressive example;" and thereupon, the jury having already returned a verdict of guilty, the judge, fidgeting in his seat (his dinner hour being long since passed, and his temper somewhat choleric), looked straight at Pat, thought of the alarming increase of drunkenness in our midst, and gave him five years in the State Prison.

Having thus judicially finished Pat Doniver, with a sigh of relief, the judge dismissed the case, and went to dinner.

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In the prison, as elsewhere, good-natured

Pat won general favour, and, in the second year of his incarceration, Warden Flint gave him the easy and comparatively agreeable position of runner.

Hitherto, the sluggish current of Mr. Doniver's prison life had pursued the dull, even tenor of its way. Now, Destiny had graciously widened the sphere of his activities. Without an atom of downright viciousness in his composition, Pat was an inborn rogue, and it was his prime delight to outwit the sharp-eyed officers of the prison; to plan and execute under their very noses an endless variety of harmless mischief. Often, in the kindness of his warm Irish heart, he did mischief "that good might come;" oftener, he wrought it for its own relishing sake.

One of the duties consequent upon Pat's vocation was the conveyance of meals to certain unruly prison spirits, who, — choosing, like Milton's Devil, rather to "reign in darkness than serve in light," — consume in penal solitude their scanty dole of bread and water; many a sly bit of relishing pork, saved from his own meagre portion, and snugly sandwiched between coarse slices of bread, solaced these hungry wretches. Often did a certain

water-proof tin box, — conveyed for this sinful purpose to our tricksy purveyor, by that underground express whose mysteries only the initiated may penetrate, — often did this box, neatly ensconced in the innocent depths of a water-bucket, empty its savoury contents into the hollow maws of refractory sinners! Pat's position in the prison also afforded him countless opportunities for that surreptitious intercourse, which, at this time, constituted the whole social interchange of the place; and, in the capacity of newsmonger and go-between, he had come to be a very popular and highly important personage in this restricted community. Who but he could adroitly snatch that propitious moment to whisper at the grating of some eager magpie of the big cage that racy bit of outside gossip, deftly gleaned from the thoughtless chat of loquacious officers?

When the "nate young gintlemun" in No. —, whose deceased great grandsire had unluckily bequeathed him certain erratic views respecting the ancient pronouns, "*Meum et tuum*," which, never quite developing in *bona-fide* crime, had in no wise proved disastrous to the aforesaid progenitor, whose bones

crumbled in the family vault as reputably as might those of that elusive "honest man," for whom the Grecian cynic, lantern in hand, is known to have vainly scoured this naughty world; — when the "nate young gintlemun,"— with the ugly heirloom which Nature, amplifying by the way, had carried disastrously on to the third generation, — sat moping and repenting alone in his prison cell, who but Pat Doniver, dropping for a bit of rest on that pine stool "forninst" the grating, would empty, *sotto voce*, in the prisoner's ear, such a budget of fun, news, and anecdote (the latter a trifle stale, but still racy) as would send this dejected young forger to his dreary cot with a cheered and comforted heart?

Is the prison runner giving a coffee-party to-night, or, like his fine old countrywoman, inaugurating "a saries of tays?" One, two, three, four tin cups! they were all handed empty through the grating; and, by some deft legerdemain of Pat, they all go back full! But whist! there comes the turnkey! Pat and his stool become instantly motionless, and, in the twinkling of an eye, he is sound asleep. The officer — not without many vigorous shakes — awakens him, and he is sent

yawning and stumbling to his cell. There, administering to himself a slight dose of his mysterious beverage, he pulls a face of extreme disgust, and thereafter, tightly holding his sides, rolls for a time on the floor of his dormitory, convulsed with suppressed laughter.

And now, in explanation of the evening's occurrence, one must bring upon the scene no less a personage than Jehaziel Green, Esq., sometime postmaster of Pinkertown, deacon of the First Church, proprietor of Pinkertown corner grocery, and overseer of its poor.

Mr. Green has, of late, fallen upon evil times. In consequence of sundry openings of plethoric letters on their passage through Pinkertown post-office, he has become a regular resident of the ——— State Prison.

As, according to the physiologists, man is atomically changed but once in seven years, Jehaziel Green — having existed but one year and three months behind the bars — is still, to all intents and purposes, chemically the same Jehaziel Green; and no whit more or less mean, selfish and unscrupulous than when he dealt out to Pinkertown sanded sugar, watered molasses and washy milk;

when he snubbed and starved the parish poor, relieved the over-weighted contribution box in the church vestry, and pried open the fat letters in the post-office.

In outward appearance he is, indeed, somewhat altered, since, at Pinkertown, his every-day suit was of fine Scotch tweed, and his Sunday attire of black broadcloth; while here, his secular and Sabbatical array is not only one and the same, but (queer freak of fancy!) it is parti-colored, red, yellow, and blue! Outside a prison a man's clothes *do*, more or less, affect his claim to favourable consideration. Behind the bars a less superficial standard holds. The elegant art of dress has been reduced to democratic simplicity.

For what saith "the Board?" "The convict's clothes are to be so calculated as to *keep him warm*."

They are not, let it be observed, to minister to his freakish taste, or to pamper his personal pride. Their sole purpose is "to keep him warm." Having thus defined the prison toilet, the worthy commissioners add — as an ethical afterthought — "they ought to be so arranged as to be considered a means of punishment." This seemingly original con-

ception of the penal uses of clothes is not, however, peculiarly "the Board's," since, outside of prison circles, men's clothes are often "so arranged" by fashion as "to be considered a means of punishment." Be that as it may, Jehaziel Green, still true to himself, is no less Jehaziel, in red, yellow, and blue, than in gray or black.

In the prison, money is necessarily scarce; yet — under the rose — there is always a deal of swapping. Mr. Green hiding his accomplishments in the prison cabinet-making department, relieves the dull routine of existence by lively attention to that especial mode of traffic.

Purloining bits of plush, of damask, rosewood, and black walnut, and pilfering varnish and glue, he swaps these commodities, — much desired for inlaid boxes, picture frames, etc., by ingenious fellow convicts, — for fruit, tobacco, and other coveted luxuries. In process of time, the unique conception of establishing a "liquor concern" behind the bars dawns upon the alert mind of the ex-postmaster. For the furtherance of this bold scheme he subtracts, from time to time, small quantities of the alcohol, used in his shop for cabinet

purposes, until, by unwearied effort, he has pilfered of this fiery liquid a sufficiency to set him up in trade. Under the circumstances, Mr. Green is compelled to transact by proxy; and Patrick Doniver, having been appointed his sole agent, is, to-night, "travelling for the Firm."

Let it not be supposed that our unmercenary runner is a salaried agent of the House of Green. Far from it! This risky service is not undertaken for filthy lucre; it is but a gratuitous kind office on the part of Mr. Doniver, mischievous enough to be undertaken for its own satisfying self — and its relish vastly enhanced by the good-natured reflection that "a bit of the crathur 'll put a warrum linin' in 'em — poor sowls!" And a terrible warm lining, say we, would such a hot "crathur" impart! But Pat has anticipated us; for well aware that he is not catering for Salamanders, he does not once dream of subjecting Mr. Green's customers to "an ordeal by fire." Carefully diluting his alcohol with innocent water, he flavors it well with essence of peppermint, — saved up from a medicinal allotment for a bygone stomach-ache, — sweetens with molasses, and, adding a sup of vinegar

from his private bottle, he produces a mixture which, if not delicious, is, undoubtedly, unique.

Having already disposed of several quarts of this mildly intoxicating beverage, Pat, recovered from his late apoplectic symptoms, prudently administers to himself, as a sedative, the balance of this rare "tap," and having, with many wry faces, drained his tin cup to the bitter dregs, composes himself to rest. On the ensuing morning several fresh patients are allowed to report themselves at hospital; and it is feared that an unfamiliar epidemic may prevail in the prison. Some half dozen convicts have been unaccountably attacked with severe vomiting, followed by extreme lassitude, and intense loathing of food. Pat Doniver is of the number, and is said to be very ill. These perplexing cases are vigorously treated by the mystified doctor, and, speedily yielding to his hit-or-miss prescriptions, the patients convalesce, and the alarm subsides. So also does the prison liquor business.

The residue of that fiery consignment,—harboured with great fear and trembling, in the innermost recesses of Mr. Doniver's straw mat-

tress, — is, at the earliest opportunity, handed over to "the Firm;" Pat — transposing for the occasion a wise old saw — judiciously observes to his employer, that "it's a poor *broth* indade, that its own *cook* cannot drink!"

Jehaziel Green — impervious to the "sweet uses of adversity" — pilfered and swapped to the end of his prison chapter. Then, migrating to the far West, he became a prosperous wholesale grocer, and is *said* to have run for Congress. ("Why," queried the rural observer, "do the *little* rogues go to prison, and the *big* ones to Congress?")

After serving out his five years, Pat Doniver had the luck to be "taken on" again as hack man; and, as the outcome of his wild sleigh-ride, he lived, ever after, a wiser and a soberer man.

TUCKERED OUT

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IRAM FISHER was "in for life," and had already served out twenty years of this hopeless term, when I made his acquaintance. From his forebears — a long line of Cape Cod fishermen — Hiram has inherited an inexhaustible stock of good nature, a well-knit frame, the muscle of an ox, and such an embarrassment of vitality, that even twenty years of bad air, meagre diet, and tiresome monotony, had not perceptibly loosened his grip on existence. For the last ten years of his term, he had been a "runner" in the prison, the right-hand man of the warden, the well approved of inferior officials, the universal favourite of convicts, and head singer in the chapel choir; and in all that time had never once broken a rule of the prison! A convict *could* no more; an angel *might* have accomplished less!

By what occult process a murderer had been evolved from material so seemingly impracticable — from a man of whom it might reasonably be predicated that he would not, of malice prepense, destroy a fly — let the sages tell us; the riddle is far beyond my poor reading. All the same, it was for murder, and in the first degree, that Hiram Fisher had been sentenced. The particulars of his crime were to be had for the asking, of any garrulous prison official, yet I was too incurious of detail to ask for them.

If "accidents" — as the proverb goes — "happen in the *best* of families," the worst may not hope to escape; and, one day, by some luckless misstep on the iron stairway of the prison, Hiram got a fall which, had Destiny consented, might have broken his neck. As it was, he was picked up in the corridor, unconscious and much bruised in body, and taken for repair to the prison hospital; and it was there that we became fast friends. It was to relieve the tedium of a long bout of reclining, with one leg inflexibly incased in plaster, that I undertook, for Hiram's sole benefit, the reading of a Dickens's Christmas carol, which had found great

favour with the convalescents gathered about the stove for the weekly hospital reading.

Before I had gone through the first half dozen pages, it became evident that Hiram, though, like most New Englanders of his class, tolerably conversant with the three Rs, had no possible use for literature of any sort. I went on half-heartedly to the bitter end, and closing the book, to his apparent relief, resolved, in my after intercourse with the patient, to confine myself strictly to conversation. After this we changed places. Hiram held forth, and I became the much entertained listener. With that easy yarn-spinning felicity, inherent in the born sailor, the patient reeled off for me so interminable a string of incident, anecdote, and heart-moving outside adventure, with such rare and racy sketches of prison life, that my Mondays (Monday was hospital day with me) became, throughout his entire convalescence, like an unbroken series of "Arabian Nights."

Notable among Hiram's hospital recitals was the little sketch which follows, and which I have attempted to reproduce (as nearly as is possible from memory) in his own quaint and homely dialect.

THE TUCKERED-OUT MAN.

"Well, arter I'd been in the "palace"* somewhere 'bout ten year, I got a leetle peaked-like, an' the doctor he overhauled me, an' sent me up t' the hospital for a spell. I wa' n't sick enough to be in bed, so, daytimes, I sot in the big room, 'round the stove, along with half a dozen mates who was 'bout in the same condition.

"It was winter weather, an' pesky cold, too, I *tell* you! We wa' n't none on us gin leave to talk, which, to be sure, was all right enough, though I must say it dooz come pleggy hard to set long side o' folks all day long 'thout openin' your head. But, anyhows, we wa' n't blindfolded, and did n't have our ears plugged neither.

"So while I sot there days, dull as a hoe, an' fur all the world like the man in the Scriptur', that had a dumb devil, I used naterally to twig what was goin' on in most parts o' the buildin'. Well, long 'bout that time we had a new chaplain t' the "palace," an' a middlin' good Christian he was, too, I should say; an' bein' a bran-new broom, he naterally swep' cleaner than the old one. Now the *old* chap-

* Convicts' term for prison.

lain, he was a master hand at prayin', an' sich like.

"Why, to hear him pray fur that instertooshing would melt a heart o' stun! and his sermons, I will say, was spun out be-eutiful! Arter that, he 'peared 'bout blowed out, an', week-days, we mostly had to look arter our own souls. Well, the new chaplain, you see, *he* was different. He b'leeved in keeping up steam right straight along, so he used ter visit the men in their cells, an' kinder try to keep 'em on a slant towards the kingdom, all the week round.

"He was mighty good to the sick, too, an' there wa' n't a man in that hospital so bad 'at he would n't do him a good turn; an' besides writin' letters fur the men (which is no more 'n 's expected on him), he used to do little arrants fur 'em outside, sich as lookin' arter their children, or huntin' up their relations, when they happened to lose the run on 'em. I heerd the warden, one day, a sayin' to one o' the inspectors, 'Our chaplain's too kind-hearted, he 'll wear hisself out.' Thinks I ter myself, 'No, he won't, you *bet!* fur, arter a spell, he 'll git callous like all the rest on yer.' A prison, ye see, 's a master place fur makin'

folks callous. But I 'm gittin' ahead o' my story.

"Well, one day I sot there by the stove, squintin' round, an' with both ears open, an' I see the new chaplain come in. He shook hands with us fellers in the big room, an' then he went round to all the cells an' talked with the patients. I see him look into No. —; the bed was made up spic an' span, an' no signs o' anybody inside, so he come away, an' sot down t'other side o' the room, a talkin' to the hospital super.

"I kinder kep' my eye on that cell, fur I knowed there 'd been a feller brought up that mornin', an' ef I wa' n't very much mistaken he 'd been put in No. —. Well, by'm by, I seed suthin' away over in the furder corner of No. —, an' pooty soon it riz up.

"Lord sakes! how I should a hollered, ef I 'd 'a' dared, when that creetur stood on its two feet, an' tiptoed forrard into the light, the very spawn o' one o' them little bogles my granny used to tell about! I should say he wa' n't more 'n four feet six, in his shoes, an' bein' a good deal bent up, he did n't look nigh so tall as he was; an' sich eyes I never *did* see in a man's head! Black as coals, an' bright as

beads; an' sich a hankerin' look, a way down in 'em, as ef he 'd been a s'archin' fur somethin' he wanted ever sence the flood, an' had n't found it yit, an' did n't 'spect to find it in this world nor t'other!

"Well, he looked round a spell, kinder skeert, an' then he skulked out inter the passage an' come down-stairs, an' arter he 'd twigged a minnit he comes straight up to the chaplain, an' teches him on the shoulder. The chaplain he turned round an' kinder gin a start, an' then sez he to the super, 'What 's the matter with this poor feller?' sez he. Afore he could answer, the little bogle he steps forrard, an' sez he, 'Doctor, don't give *me* any o' your physic, keep it for *t' others*. Doctor-stuff won't do *me* no good. *I'm tuckered out!*'

"The super he teched his forrard, an' gin the chaplain a side look, an' sez he, 'Ah, yes, I see!' An' then, willin' to pacify the poor creetur, he turns to him as pleasant as can be, an' sez he, 'You mistake me, my friend, I 'm not the doctor, but all the same I 've come here to help you, an' what may I do fur you to-day?' The little feller looked at him a minnit, kinder troubled like, an' then he fetched a sigh, and shook his head, an'

sez he, 'Physic's *no use*, I'm *tuckered out!*' 'But mebbe now,' sez the chaplain, 'I may be able to do some little thing fur you outside. Ain't there some one there you'd like a visit from now?' sez he.

"Outside? — *out* — *side?*' sez the little man, puttin' his skinny hand to his forrard, as ef he wanted to remember suthin', but could n't fur the life on him. 'Out — *side* — o-u-t — side? Du tell, is it there, *now?* I would n't 'a' thought it, though; I ain't heerd nothin' on it fur — fur' — countin' his lean fingers, an' rubbin' his forrard again — 'fur fifteen year!

"'*Outside, eh?* an' is Deely there now? She was a hansum gal when I merried her. I sot the world by Deely! Le's see; she was goin' to Californy, Deely was. I wonder if she's got there yit? I hain't heerd a word from her fur fifteen year. But Benjy knows all about her. Benjy's my fust cousin, doctor. He said he'd come an' see me, but he hain't come yit. He's busy, I s'pose, and can't git time.' An' arter he'd fumbled a spell in his breast-pocket, he pulled out a dirty scrap o' paper with some writin' on it, an' handin' on it to the chaplain, sez he, '*That's*

where Benjy lives, doctor. He said he 'd come an' see me, an' let me know 'bout *her;* an' I 've waited fifteen year, doctor, an' all that time I hain't heerd a word from Deely! Mebbe,' sez he, lookin' into the chaplain's face kinder wishful, 'Mebbe sometime you 'd go an' see Benjy *fur* me, and ask him if he 's ever heerd from Deely sence she started for Californy. Fifteen year 's a long spell to wait,' sez he, heavin' another sigh, 'an' I 'm clean *tuckered out.*' I seen a tear drop on to the chaplain's white necktie, an' sez I to myself, 'he 's a thinkin' o' his *own* wife' (a pretty, chipper little lady she was, too, — I see her one day in chapel), an' sez I, '*he 'll go!*'

"Well, the super, he told the little tuckered-out creetur to go back to his cell. So he crep' back, as still as a mouse. He did n't lay down, fur I watched him. He skulked into a corner, an' crouched down on the floor ezackly as ef he was tryin' to tie himself up into a hard knot, an' there he staid, as still as a stun image. Arter that, I heerd the super tellin' the chaplain that the man had turns o' bein' out o' his head, an' he 'd come up to be treated fur it.

"'His name,' sez he, 'is David Sweeney. He 's an American, an' in fur twenty year fur highway robbery. No mortal knows how he come to do it,' sez he, 'for he had a good trade, an' plenty o' work at it, an' had allers borne a good character, an', only three months before, he 'd married the very girl he wanted, Delia White, as pretty as a pink, an' smart as a steel trap. Some folks thought *she* might 'a' ben at the bottom on 't, for she was a toppin' gal, an' mighty fond o' gew-gaws, an' he 'd 'a' cut off his right hand to please her. I should say she turned out a poor bargain, anyhow, for he 's never set eyes on her sence he come to the prison. I remember folks pitied the poor feller a good deal at the time, for he was young an' this was his first offence; but highway robbery 's bad business,' sez he, 'an' if a man *will* foller it, why then let him take the consequences, *I* say.' Next arternoon the chaplain he come up to the hospital agin', an' went in an' talked a spell with the little tuckered-out man. I could n't hear what he said, but arterwards I heerd him tell the super how he 'd been to hunt up the 'fust cousin' who, as nigh as he could come at it, kep' a grocery store on Cambridge Street fifteen year ago; but he 'd

moved to Vermont, bag an' baggage, years ago, an' nobody round there had heerd a lisp from him sence. Well, next day Deely's husband got wild as a hawk, an' had to be locked up in his cell, an' afore he was fit to go round loose again I 'd got peart, an' gone down. An' purty pleased I was, too, I tell you, for the warden he gin me a runner's berth, an' that ain't to be sneezed at. Well, I should say it wa' n't more 'n six months arter that, when long in the edge o' the evenin' I was sent up in the third tier of the north wing to kerry some apples that one o' the instructors had brought in for a prisoner belongin' to his shop. When I come to the right door I was goin' to hand 'em through the gratin', but, not seein' nobody, I coughed to let the feller know I was there; an' then, hearin' a rustlin' over on the bed, I peeked in, an there, as sure as eggs, was the little 'tuckered-out' man, tied in the same old hard knot, an' with the same old, lonesome, hankerin' look on his wizened little face! When he heerd me, he riz up, and come forrard, an' when I gin him the apples he kinder perked up a minnit, but before I could turn round he drapped on to the bed agin as dismal as ever, an', as I come away, I heerd him a

moanin' to hisself, 'O Lord! O Lord! tuckered out! tuckered out!'

"Well, arter that, I seen him consider'ble, off an' on, an', somehow, he 'peared to take a shine to me, an' we got to be purty good friends. He wa'n't a grain out o' his head now, but uncommon dismal, an' enjoyed purty poor health, I should say from his looks, though he didn't complain to nobody. One night, long 'bout Christmas time, I was sent inter his wing on some arrant or other, an', as I was goin' kinder slow past his door, I see him beckoning to me. I wa'n't apt to go agin the rules, but, thinks I, 't won't break nobody ef I stop a minnit, an' jest say a word to this poor creetur. So I looked sharp, an' seein' as nobody was twiggin' me, I went up to the gratin' an' shook hands with him, an' sez I, 'I hope I see you well, Sweeney.' Sez he, 'No, not *very* well, Hiram, an' here 's my goold ring,' sez he, 'an' I want you to keep it fur me. I sha'n't have no use fur it fur some time.' So he put the ring on the little finger o' my left hand, an' a tight squeeze it was, too. 'Twas real Guinny goold, with two hearts, an' a 'D' cut inside on't. He wa'n't a grain flighty that night, but sich

a sorrowful look as he gin me, when he put that ring on my finger, you never *did* see. An' then he shook hands with me agin, an' sez he, 'How dretful long these nights be, Hiram. But they'll get shorter arter Christmas, won't they? Good-by, Hiram, God bless you!'

"Well, to make a long story short, next mornin' airly, while the men was bein' rung out, I was a settin' things to rights in the warden's office, when he comes runnin' in in a great fluster, an' sez he to the deputy, 'Sweeney's fell from the third corridor, an' I guess he's 'bout done for. He 's up,' sez he, 'in the hospital. Send for the doctor, an' the crowner, too, as quick as possible.' I was dretful flurried, but I got through my work somehow, an' by'm by I went inside to clean up the passage, an' when I see some spots o' blood there, I knowed what *that* meant. Arterwards, I heerd the warden an' the chaplain talkin' it over, an', as fur as I could larn, the little 'tuckered-out' man never spoke to nobody arter they took him up, though he lived half an hour. The crowners they sot on him, an' brung in a verdick of '*death by accident*,' but *I* hed his goold ring on my

finger, an' I knew all about *Deely*. 'An',' sez I to myself, 'some accidents is *done* a *purpose*, I reckon!'

"Next day was Friday, an' a feller who 'd had a visit from his sister come along feelin' purty chipper, with a big bowkay in his fist. He pulled out a spice pink an' a couple o' sprigs o' rose geranium, an' gin 'em to me, an', thinkin' they might come in play, I put 'em by, in a bottle o' water.

"Well, long in the forenoon, I had to kerry some truck to the hospital, an' I took my little posy along. There stood the coffin, all ready for Tewksbury, for the warden was away that day, and they wa' n't goin' to have service over the body, as most ginerally they do. I asked the super ef I might look at the corpse, and sez he, 'Certainly, Hiram,' an' he steps up to the coffin an' lifts the forrard kiver, an' bless me! ef I wa' n't beat! There lay the little 'tuckered-out' man, as smilin' as a basket o' chips!

"I suppose I 'peared kinder took aback, for the super he says to me, sez he, 'Don't he look naterel to you, Hiram?' 'Nateral, sir?' sez I, 'an' *that contented!* Why, I never should ha' knowed him, ef I 'd met him any-

wheres else!' Well, the super he kind er smiled, an' walked off, an' I stood there a minnit or so, a lookin' at the corpse, an' a thinkin'; an' sez I to myself, 'We know pleggy little 'bout t' other world *anyhow*. The Scripters, now,' sez I, '*doos* say that arter death there ain't neither merryin' nor givin' in merrige. Howsomedever,' I sez, 'I 'll put my spice pink an' my geranium sprigs inside the coffin.' An' I did. An' then I pulled off the goold ring with the two hearts an' the 'D' inside on 't. 'Fur,' sez I, 'though I won't ezackly go agin Scripter, I 'm sartin sure that Sweeney would n't lay here *that* smilin', ef he had n't someways, in t' other world, got wind o' Deely.' So I slipped that ring on to his stiff merrige finger, an' as I shet the coffin up, an' come away, I e'en a'most thought I heerd him larf right out."

A PRISON CHILD

A PRISON CHILD.

T an age when most children are tenderly wrapped in the cotton-wool of domestic seclusion, that golden-haired toddler, the warden's daughter, a motherless little creature, escaped from the careless durance of a busy maid of all work, had become, comparatively, a public character, and, no longer a private baby, had been tacitly appropriated by an entire prison community.

"Taking her walks abroad" in the roomy guard-room; pattering right and left, on tiny aimless feet, she peered curiously up and down and round about. With childish wonder (herself "the cynosure of neighbouring eyes") she peeped through tall iron gratings into mysterious corridors, with their endless stretches of dusky cells; at dizzy flights of iron stairs, where — pannikin in hand — listless men trod, day after day, the same weary road.

More intently she looked into the shifting panorama of human faces, ever unfolding beneath her innocent gaze. Faces of prison visitors, of prison officers, and instructors; faces of that motley throng behind the bars; faces hard and evil, reckless and defiant, cowed and sullen, or sorrowful, shamed, and forlorn; yet none, among them all, turned disapprovingly upon her, the prison child, the single sunbeam, the one pure and beautiful presence in this attainted, unlovely place! Convict fathers, — hungry for baby faces, foregone through their own graceless folly and crime, — catching a passing glimpse of the golden head, a distant flutter of the white baby gown, were, for the moment, glad and blest.

Although, in the main, light of heart, — as are all young creatures drinking their first sweet wine of life, — little Mabel was not, altogether, as the outside children, who breathe untainted air, and have never neighboured with the wretchedness of that "black flower of civilisation," a criminal prison. Looking into hard, despairing eyes behind the guard-room grating, her own would sometimes fill with sudden tears; and marking, in dull pro-

cession, the tread of listless, joyless feet, the lithe young figure, with the springing step, would often instinctively slow itself to sympathetic rhythm.

But, when grown in grace and in favour with God, and the prisoner, Queen May, now a sedate maiden of five summers, had coaxed old Peter Floome, the prison runner, and her *self*-elected nurse, to her royal wishes; when lifted proudly in his arms she was permitted to pass bodily into the prison yard, that hitherto unexplored region, — to make a royal progress through the entire round of the workshops, — scattering, right and left, gracious smiles and pungent checkerberry lozenges saved up for this great occasion; when she was triumphantly borne to the underground prison kitchen, there to be handed gingerly around among as many aproned cooks as might have served "Old King Cole," at his jolliest, and was munched and kissed by lips, — presumably not morally of the cleanest, — yet what, indeed, mattered this to the uncritical child? The convict, like "Cathleen's dun cow," "Tho' wicked he was, was *gentle* to *her;*" — then it was that the glory of the occasion, and Peter Floome's pride in his

beloved nursling, rose far beyond the high-water mark of words!

And here let it be stated that Warden Flint's baby daughter had, in the prison, another friend far more eligible than that brain-cracked convict, Peter Floome.

He was a prison officer, to wit, that notable turnkey who keeps the guard-room doors. His not over-euphonious name was Timothy Tucker, and, though a bachelor of fifty, and a very dragon at holding a door, to little birds and little children the turnkey's heart was as wax.

Soon after his instalment in the guard-room he had, with Warden Flint's grudging permission, hung, high in its tall window, five small bird cages. In these, three yellow canaries, a Java sparrow, and a dainty pair of love-birds, all optimistic creatures that —

> "Neither look before nor after,
> Nor pine for what is not" —

hopped as contentedly, or sang as rapturously, as if the prison were indeed (as fabled in convict slang) "the palace." As for the prison child, from the first hour of her ap-

pearance in the guard-room, she had commanded the turnkey's susceptible heart. His "little Blossom," he had called her, and when, later, she imparted to him the pretty abbreviation of her name, it was he who wedded the two charming words, and so made the "prison name" of the warden's daughter, May-blossom. Seldom was the genial, child-loving turnkey too busy to pilot the small, tottering feet across the guard-room floor; to hold her high in his arms to "'ook at tunnin' birdies," or to lift her, in dizzy delight, to her favourite perch, his tall desk, by the rear window, commanding all the fascinating bustle of the prison yard. And when from prattling infancy she had advanced to garrulous, inquisitive childhood, it was he who lent an ever-ready ear to her thousand and one questions.

"Children, now, *is* curus," said Mr. Tucker to his landlady, over his evening pipe, "they beat birds all holler! There's May-blossom, now, only six years old, an' she sticks *me* sometimes, she *does*, an' no mistake!"

The train of thought, leading to these frank observations, had been started in the good turnkey's mind by the recollection of a recent theological skirmish with this astute little

being, in which (to use his own forcible words) he "had ben most gol darn'dly beat." This embryo free-religionist having insisted upon being told "Why, if God, *certain true*, loved everybody, an' was bigger an' stronger, an' ever so much gooder than *other* folks, He did n't stop people's being bad, so 's they had to be put in prison, without little children to kiss, an' kittens to play with, an' strawberries an' cake, an' things to eat?" Ah, little soul! too soon perplexed by the ancient riddle; why *does n't* He — why, indeed! Young and old, wise and simple, we are all guessing together; and no man solves the immemorial puzzle!

Peter Floome — when, upon a Sunday, the prison chaplain exhorted his not over-heedful flock to pious dependence upon the divine care — was wont to make his own disparaging comments upon the well-meant, but often inapplicable discourse. "'Tain't a grain o' use" (said this volunteer critic, to his fellow-convicts) "o' the chaplain braggin' *in here* 'bout Providence, an' sich. Most prob'ly th' Almighty *is*, more or less, round 'tendin' to things; but, nat'rally, the devil takes charge o' prisons, an' runs 'em putty much his own way."

Peter, having had a good twenty years' stretch of prison life, his experience undoubtedly counted. His utterances were, however, to be taken with that corrective grain of salt with which one wisely qualifies the statement of the "crank;" for though, in the main, mentally sound, through long confinement, and much hopeless pondering, Peter Floome's brain had taken a decidedly pessimistic twist, and, in prison circles, he was unanimously dubbed "a crank." It was after the death of Warden Flint's wife, that Peter's theology became a shade more optimistic; for then it was that the warden's year-old daughter, by the tacit consent of all whom it might concern, fell to his especial care.

In his capacity of runner, Peter had, comparatively, the freedom of the prison, and was particularly detailed for duty in the warden's household. The child — with that unaccountable choice of favourites inherent in her kind — had taken famously to her convict dry-nurse. It was the sudden rising of this new star on the runner's narrow horizon, that inspired the following harangue: "Ef th' Almighty, as I say, don't jest *put up* in prisons, Himself, leastways He *does*, now an'

agin, send little angels, an' *sich*, to keep up a feller's courage."

Peter and his "little angel" might now often be seen together; for the child, following hard upon his heels, had one day slipped furtively through the guard-room door, and had thus become a regular *habitué* of that semi-public apartment.

Ten summers of this exceptional child-life had passed over May-blossom's golden head, when Destiny (that other name for Providence) suddenly removed her to an environment far more kindly than that in which her sweet young eyes had opened upon this many-sided existence. But, to explain, we must escape at once from prison.

* * * * * * *

Here, in the soft September sky, not the faintest speck of a cloud may be seen. The river, broken into endless ripples by a crisp west wind, glances like molten sunshine; and not many rods from its pebbled shore, behold that goodly sight, an old colonial homestead!

Four generations of Parkers have lived their lives in this ancient dwelling beside the Saganock, which has all the well-to-doativeness (if one may coin a word) inherent in the

ancestral homes of such favoured children of men as have much goods laid up for many years. And here, upon "the stoop," in after-dinner ease, sits the mistress of the mansion — Miss Paulina Parker. Miss Paulina is the last of the Parkers. In her snowy gown and gauzy dress-cap, she is, to-day, dainty as a white butterfly. Far and wide is she known as the Lady Bountiful of Saganock; and a dearer, lovelier old maid the sun never shone upon; and, though her sixtieth birthday falls on the twentieth of this very month, you would not take her to be a day over forty-five! The lean, gaunt old body, rocking beside yonder window, in the kitchen ell, is Harmy Patterson. For the last fifty years Harmy has cooked and saved for the Parker family, and still considers herself in the prime of her usefulness. She is reading the Boston *Recorder*, to her *confrère* — Mandy Ann, the second girl; who, all agape, swallows the delectable murders, marriages, and deaths that spice its columns. Reuben, the hired man, leisurely running a lawn-mower past the open window, pauses beneath it, from time to time, to solace himself with some especial tidbit of horror. While Miss Paulina, in pensive reverie, looks

out on river and sky, and marks how, in the Saganock burying-ground, a maple or two has prematurely reddened, she is suddenly confronted by Harmy Patterson, newspaper in hand, spectacles pushed over her brown foretop, and cap-strings flying in the wind. Excitedly indicating, with her long forefinger, an especial column of her favourite journal, she pantingly exclaims: "Fur pity sake, Miss Paulina, du jes' read *this*!"

Promptly acceding to the request of the old body, Miss Parker reads attentively the following:

"FEARFUL TRAGEDY AT THE STATE PRISON!

"As the warden of the Massachusetts State Prison was this morning making his round of observation and inspection among the shops, being in the shoemaking department at about ten and a half o'clock, and passing the bench where one Hodges (a disorderly convict, who, after repeated and severe punishment, had, that morning, been remanded to his shop) was at work, Hodges suddenly sprang upon him from behind, stabbing him with a shoe-knife, and killing him instantly. The assassin was immediately secured, heavily ironed, and committed, for safe-keeping, to the "Lower Arch." The body of the unfortunate warden was removed to the hospital, a coroner summoned, and the inspectors

convened. By this sad occurrence a young family is bereaved of paternal support, and the prison of a long-tried and faithful officer."

"Dear me, Harmy, what a sad affair!" cries the compassionate reader; "and Josiah Flint's moth— no; let me see! I have it now. Josiah Flint's *grandmother* was a — was a Parker, Harmy."

"Yes 'm," replies the woman, who has the Parker genealogy at her tongue's end; "an' your pas was *second* cousins; an' the warden, ef he 'd a lived, would be your *third* cousin. Law sakes! I mind, as well as can be, young Josiah an' his pa comin' to Saganock. You was a girl then, an' old Josiah, he was minister in Salem, an' his father before him (an' hot and heavy *he* made it for witches, folks say). Well, he come to Saganock to preach for our minister, an' brung his boy along; an' bein' connections, they was asked to put up with us. Sakes alive! I remember it all well as ef it want but yisterday. That Sunday we had apple pie an' milk betwixt sermons, an' when afternoon meetin' was out, I gin 'em a pipin' hot supper. Well, the old man was a powerful preacher," rambles on the old retainer, while Miss Paulina, heedless of her chatter,

sits pondering the situation. "An' I had remarkable exercises of mind that Sunday; but there! that boy, goodness gracious! did n't he make way with my clam fritters an' gooseberry pie? Well, well, this is a dyin' world; an' now *his* time 's come; an' sich an awful providence, too!" And here, kindly oblivious of the ancient onslaught on her supper, old Harmy drops a pitying tear for the dead warden.

"Harmy," says Miss Paulina, decisively, "Josiah Flint's wife has been dead these nine years, and somebody must see to those poor orphan children. Tell Reuben to put Major into the carryall. I shall take the next train for Boston, and probably stay at the prison till the funeral is over."

In accordance with this humane resolve, Miss Parker packs her travelling bag, and, in her second best black silk gown, sets out at four P. M. for the State Prison. Very cold and gray, in the early autumn twilight, is the residence of the late Josiah Flint, when Miss Paulina Parker alights from the depot carriage at its frowning entrance. A jaded housemaid answers the bell, and ushers her into a slip-shod parlor, and thus meets her inquiries for "the warden's family:"

"Famblee, is it, mem? sure, an' it's jist broken up, it is. There's himself (God rest him) as dead as a dooer-nail. The baby wint years ago, along wid the mother; an' the soon he died with the ammonia (pneumonia) lasht fall, whilst he was away to the schule; an' as fur the girl — she's that wantherin', sure, that I could n't jist this minnit lay me finger on the crather."

Discouraged by this curt summary, Miss Parker half inclines to a French leave of the prison; but inspired by the hope of future usefulness to the small estray upon whom Bridget cannot "jist lay a finger," she resolves to remain, and somehow elbow her way into this dubious and fragmentary domestic circle.

"I am Miss Parker (she explains), the warden's cousin, from Saganock. I have come to stay over the funeral, if you can conveniently keep me.

"Sure, mem, no doot we can, if, be the same token, it proves convanient to yerself," responds the girl. "The korp, indade, is after wakin' itself in the bist chamber; but there's the intry bidroom at your service, intirely."

Miss Paulina graciously accepting the proffered chamber, Bridget kindly leads the way

to the "intry bid-room;" and, bidding her "have no fear of the korp," hurries off in pursuit of the needful toilet furnishment, leaving the guest alone in the small dusky apartment.

Interwoven with her life experience, as it has ever been, death has hitherto been calmly confronted by Miss Paulina; but to-night, alone in a strange dwelling, with a murdered man in the adjoining apartment, and neighboured, no doubt, by scores of murderers, it is all unutterably depressing; and when Bridget, having, as she states, waited to "rub out a clane towel, an' hate a flat for that same," comes clattering through the hall, with the damp napery across her arm, a lamp in one hand, and a slopping ewer in the other, the nervous lady is half disposed to hug her for the bare relief afforded by her presence! Hastily arranging the dusty wash-stand, Bridget announces the instant "goin' on" of supper, and graciously invites her to "tak a look at the korp, an' thin walk doon." Left alone, Miss Paulina removes bonnet and shawl, bathes her face, dons her cap, and, ignoring "the korp," hastily descends to the dining-room.

The supper, a badly cooked, ill-served meal, is solitary and uncomfortable, the "childer" having, according to Bridget, kindly consented to be captured, to be put to bed, and to cry herself to sleep. Miss Paulina, weary and forlorn, soon retires. Already half-undressed, she finds that her travelling bag, containing her night gear and toilet necessaries, together with sundry toothsome packages, provided as "sops" for supposable hostile small Flints, has been left below stairs. Bridget being presumably beyond call, the good lady must herself seek the missing bag. It is safe in the entrance hall, and, hastily securing it, she essays to return to her own quarters. In her bewilderment, she somehow misses her bedroom door, and, instead, opens that of the chamber containing the corpse.

Already well into the apartment, she discovers her mistake, and, simultaneously, lets fall her lamp, surprised by the unlooked-for tableau confronting her. Here, in the dimly-lighted room, close to the murdered warden, whose face she has uncovered,— like some exquisite statue of Pity, mute, motionless, and scarce less pallid than the marble before her, — stands the night-robed figure of May-blos-

som. No childish recoil from that awful presence disturbs her sweet, earnest face. A solemn awe is in the wistful gray eyes, a mute interrogation of that confronting mystery, blent with the tender pathos of commisserating love. Startled by the clatter of the falling lamp, the child turns, and timidly awaits the approach of the unknown intruder. Dear, kind Miss Paulina! Surprise and wonder at once give way to the one absorbing desire to clasp in her warm, motherly arms this lovely, lonely child.

"Poor little darling," she murmurs, caressingly, approaching and kissing the tear-wet cheek. "Why are you here so late, and all alone?"

"I thought," apologizes the child, "I thought it might not be so *very* wrong. The nights are so long, and when I tried to sleep my eyes would n't shut; for I kept thinking of him (indicating reverently the corpse), and of the other, too. Peter says *he 's* crazy, and awful wicked, and down there in the dungeon with the rats, an' all in irons! And when I thought of it, I got wider and wider awake, and then I came to father. When he was alive (apologetically), of course, he did n't

care to have me around, and so I stayed mostly with Uncle Tim and Peter, and the others; but I thought he might be glad, up in heaven, if he saw me staying with him *now* when he is all alone."

"It was not at all wrong, dear child," says Miss Paulina; "but come away with *me* now. I am your father's cousin, my child, your Aunt Paulina. You shall try *my* bed to-night, and see if you cannot sleep *there*."

Permitting the child a last good-night kiss, Miss Paulina re-covers the dead face of Warden Flint, upon which the sharp agony of that cruel exit from life yet lingers, and the two pass reverently from the chamber.

Never, in all May-blossom's unmothered life, has there been a night like this. The warm cuddling in tender arms, two fairy tales, the tucking up in bed, and, last of all, the singing of a Scotch ballad, sweet as April rain, upon whose soothing rhythm the weary little soul floats awhile in semi-consciousness, and, at last, falls deliciously into the soft arms of sleep.

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We may be sure that all the veteran funeral-goers (those irrepressible "mutes") were on

evidence at the funeral of Warden Flint; that his most sequestered virtues were brought to the front, and put on parade for the occasion, and that the usual number in attendance pronounced the remarks "excellent." After the service the coffin is borne uncovered through the guard-room, and deposited in the prison yard. The convicts filing thither, in reverent procession, are permitted a last look at their warden. Hodges, the murderer, taken from his rayless dungeon, and blinking dazedly at the light, is (after the old-time experimental fashion) brought face to face with the corpse. He neither weeps nor smiles. His face wears the blank expression of utter imbecility. After much prodding from his attendants, he recognizes the warden, and babbles, "O dear! have I killed him?" When bidden to put his hand on the body, he recoils and shudders. He exhibits no other emotion, and, clanking his irons, is led supinely back to the "Lower Arch." The convicts retire in slow, orderly procession, and the coffin is returned to more private quarters. The lid is screwed down. Mrs. Jones, standing at the front window, counts the carriages, and, as the body is being

adjusted on its hearse, Mrs. Miller, in a resonant whisper, asks Mrs. Brown, "How soon they expect to get into the new house, and if she 's weaned the baby?" Amid this easy chit-chat, the mourning carriages fill, the procession starts. After this, the Joneses, Millers, and Browns go their ways. The funeral is over.

Warden Flint's successor, an oldish man with grown-up sons, promptly appointed by the governor, arrived upon the scene directly upon the heels of *his* departure (deaths widest gaps are soon filled!), and, as there were none to say her nay, Miss Parker tacitly adopted his homeless child, and made ready for *her* departure. Miss Paulina (admirable as she was) had her limitations. The convict, viewed through the disparaging lens of her own immaculate spectacles, was not an eligible associate, and the tender, all-round leave-taking, permitted between her innocent charge and her attainted friends, was an heroic stretch of good-will on the part of this excellent lady.

At last, it was all well over. May-blossom had given her farewell hug to Peter Floome and "Uncle Tim," and her sweet eyes yet wet with tears, and hanging, as to a last plank,

upon the cage of a fluttering yellow canary (the parting souvenir of the inconsolable turnkey), was safely bestowed in the two P. M. train on her way to Saganock, — now no longer a "prison child."

The general depression incident to the withdrawal of this sweet familiar presence from the gray old prison was slightly relieved by speculative interest in the new warden. It might reasonably be hoped that this bran-new broom would sweep away *some* time-honoured abuses — such as the iron crown, the ball and chain, the lash, and the parti-coloured prison attire. It was also inferred that he would reduce the number of consignments to the "Lower Arch," since a recently dungeoned culprit had gone stark mad in that unsavoury place, and refusing, on the expiration of his term of detention, to vacate in favour of an incoming tenant, had been, like some elusive rat, actually smoked out of his hole! * As to that forceful incentive to propriety, the penal shower-bath, it was whispered that even the commissioners themselves had become shaky in regard to its usefulness, since the sad

* A fact furnished by an aged officer who witnessed this unique eviction.

taking off of a prison warden had been the latest result of that mode of disciplinary torture, a description of which is here subjoined for the curious.

The refractory wretch, his arms, legs, and neck confined in wooden stocks, is seated, nude, in a small, dark closet. From three to four barrels of water are placed above his head, at an elevation of six to eight feet. Unable to change in the slightest degree his position, he receives upon the top of his head, drop by drop, in sudden shower or heavy douche (as may best suit the fancy of his tormentor), this terrible bath. As a devilish after-thought of the inventor, a trench-like collar is made to encircle the victim's neck; as the water descends, this collar fills, and it is so contrived that at the least movement of the sufferer's head the water shall flow into his mouth and nostrils, until he is upon the verge of strangulation. By order of the Board, the shower bath was, in 18—, set up in the State Prison. Could that criminal institution have furnished an unlimited supply of waterproof brains, it might have flourished there indefinitely; but mad convicts are troublesome, nay, *sometimes* dangerous, and insanity

behind the bars is, therefore, not to be wantonly induced.

Hodges, a provokingly incorrigible sinner, had been, time out of mind, "under treatment." At the command of Warden Flint, he had (putting it in Peter Floome's own forcible English) "ben showered out of his wits, and into his wits, an' then showered right *over* agin." In the abnormal mental state induced by this prolonged torture, the wretched creature had finally turned upon his tormentor. Discouraged by this unlooked-for practical result of the shower-bath, the Board subsequently ordered the discontinuance of its use in the prison; and Hodges was the last subject of that infernal contrivance.

He was brought to trial for the murder of his keeper, and acquitted on the ground of insanity; and finally made good his escape from this troublous life, by a leap from an upper window of the State Insane Hospital.

Hodges was an accomplished rogue, and a second comer to the prison, and it is to be inferred that by the door of death "he went to his place," leaving the world none the poorer by his withdrawal from it; all the

same, he is to be congratulated on his ultimate escape from the penal water cure.

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It is May-day; and high tide with the Saganock. It is a brimful hurrying river, and, at this moment, fully verifies that distracting old saw, "Time and tide stay for no man." And here, amid budding lilacs and singing robins, some half head taller, and two good years older than on the day when she bade a final adieu to the prison, is May-blossom. On this sunny slope of the Parker lawn she is prospecting for early violets. Her sweet face has grown thinner. Violet circles underline her soft gray eyes. Her lips are as threads of scarlet wool, and, listening, you may hear her cough — deep and hollow. Alas! It is a sound to make the heart ache.

Soon wearied by her futile search, the child returns to her cosy corner on "the stoop," and there, curled up beneath the soft warm folds of an afghan, watches the westering sun, the fleecy clouds, and the familiar river speeding on to the sea.

Meantime, at the north door, Dr. Abel Foster, the family "medicine man," briskly alights from his buggy. Before his hand can

touch the knocker it is opened by Miss Paulina herself. "Good afternoon, my dear lady; and so pussy is still ailing, is she?" cries the good doctor (this with assumed nonchalance, slightly overdone).

"Yes, Doctor Foster," replies Miss Parker; "and will you kindly sound her lungs to-day, and let me know the worst? One flinches indeed, but, if it *must* come — why, then —" an ominous quaver in the gentle voice; and the doctor shrewdly interrupts:

"Bless you, madam! I 'm in a terrible hurry! Twenty patients waiting for me this minute! Let me see the little girl at once."

May-blossom is called in, her blue-veined wrist consigned to the doctor's big feelers; her tongue submitted to a critical inspection; and, after undergoing a prolonged professional thumping and hearkening, she is soundly hugged and kissed, and, with a nod and a smile, dismissed. After this, Doctor Foster and the lady of the mansion are closeted awhile together. The buggy then passes down the drive, and disappears on the long dusty road. Soon after, the south door opens, and a face, pale and sad, but very calm, bends over the child, who has again returned to her out-door

seat. Very tenderly is the warm afghan folded about the small, fragile form. The robins no longer sing. The sun, half-obscured, is going down. The burying-ground stands drearily out against the murky sky. The pines wail mournfully, and the river — at ebbing tide — murmurs in sad refrain. Old Harmy, moulding tea-biscuits at her kitchen window, imparts to Mandy Ann — who is shaving the dried beef for tea — her belief that Miss Paulina "hes gone clean crazy, settin' out-doors with that child, an' the dew a fallin' this very minnit, like sixty!" Miss Paulina — recovering her wits — hurries her darling in. The tea-table is already laid in the south keeping-room, beside the wide fireplace, with its ancient crane, and its Scriptural border of watery blue Dutch tiles; and, in the cheerful apple-wood blaze, the two partake together of that now almost obsolete meal — a substantial six o'clock tea. May-blossom is then snugly settled among the cushions of a wide chintz lounge, and the elder lady, in a low seat beside her, and holding lovingly her small wasted hand, — as is her wont, — chats pleasantly with her darling, in the soft, quiet gloaming. At nine, they pass, hand in hand,

to Miss Paulina's own chamber, where the child's cot has long been established. May-blossom undressed, kissed, and blessed, creeps drowsily between its warm blankets, and is soon sound asleep. Miss Paulina, in her dressing-gown, broods over the dying fire, far into the night. Alas! have not all her best beloved gone from her? Why might not Heaven have spared to her this last — the one ewe lamb, so tenderly carried in her arms, and warmed in her lonely bosom? Why not; ah, *why?* She recalls the blessed comfort of two love-lightened years; the daily lessons, when to teach this bright little creature had been a mere pastime; their woodland fern and flower-gatherings, their winter fireside cosiness, all the nameless homely delights of love's dear fellowship — wayside flowers, that, scarce perceived, blossom along life's trodden ways. And now it is all coming to an end! Nothing will be left her but one small, grass-grown grave! As if there were not already graves enough in her world!

May-blossom, though not a sickly child, had never been robust; and when, at midwinter, she had taken the measles, this epidemic of childhood had gone hard with her.

She had convalesced but slowly; an ugly cough had set in, and could not be routed; and now there were hectic afternoons, debilitating night-sweats, succeeded by mornings of lassitude; and, to-day, Doctor Foster had summed up his diagnosis in one dreadful word — *consumption!*

"The child," explained the good doctor — tears blinding his kind old eyes — "has grown up (as it were) in the cellar; delicate nervous organization; too much brain; too little out-door life; and the outcome of it all is simply this — with that cough, and that constitution (God help us!) an angel from heaven could n't save her!"

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Summer is coming. The buttercups are here. May-blossom is better. She sleeps well, coughs less, and her appetite is mending. Buoyed by deceitful hope, Miss Paulina takes heart, and the train for Boston, from whence, — crowned with the spoil of a half day's shopping,— she is, at this very moment, returning. The carryall fairly groans under its accumulated bundles; and the steel-clasped bag upon her arm is plethoric, to the last degree. Hours have passed since

she parted from her darling. Hastily alighting, she hurries in. There is an under-quaver of anxiety in her voice as she calls, "May! May, May, dear!" Where *can* the child be, that she has not run to meet her! "May!" again, and louder — still no reply. Yet now a never-to-be-mistaken voice comes cooingly from the kitchen. "Who *can* the darling be fondling? (Harmy Patterson, though staunch and loving, is not one to unbend to endearments!) Her kitten, most likely."

She softly opens the kitchen door. Amazement stays her feet upon the threshold! Harmy, mute with horror, indicates with stretched forefinger her own clean patchwork-cushioned rocker, wherein, bolt upright, sits an unknown man, — and *such* a man! His coarse, dusty garments (evidently fashioned without the slightest reference to their present wearer) hang scarecrow-wise upon his graceless form. Under his slouched hat (which he democratically retains) he seems to skulk abjectly from the gazer's eye; as well he may, for, unshaven and unshorn, his wide mouth stained with tobacco, his hands and face begrimed with dust, he looks, every inch, the wretched outcast that he *is!* And (no

wonder that old Harmy gapes distraught), seated lovingly upon this creature's knee, her dainty fingers clasping his dirty hand, her golden curls brushing his grimy neck, is May-blossom, — yes, May-blossom, her own sweet self, beaming, and fond, and absolutely unconscious of the incongruity of the situation. And this forlorn being, craving still of humanity but leave to carry on its shoulders the shamed head of a man, is a convict, — our old prison acquaintance, Peter Floome, May-blossom's sometime nurse, and always friend!

Lightly springing from her unseemly perch, the child hastens to greet Miss Paulina, and, hanging fondly upon her hand, cries eagerly, "Oh, auntie, darling, I'm so glad you've come! Here's Peter, dear old Peter! He's pardoned out, auntie, and, isn't it nice? He can come and see me every day now if he likes.

"Why, auntie! (somewhat crestfallen) are n't you glad? and won't you shake hands with him? Peter is nice, auntie, and he used to take *such* care of me when I was *ever* so little. You'll like Peter when he's washed up, and so will Harmy, though she *does* mind him just a little *now*, because she's not acquainted with

him." (Harmy, *sotto voce*, and emphatically, "Lord sakes, no; an' don't never want to be!") Here, reminiscences of prison etiquette visiting Peter's dazed mind, he shuffles bashfully to his feet, and, pulling distractedly at his matted forelock, goes through a certain gymnic performance, supposed, by himself, to constitute a bow. The ice thus broken, Peter finds his tongue, and blurts out a "Good day, marm, hope I see yer well, marm."

Miss Paulina bows, a pause ensues. Peter looks admiringly at May-blossom, and, thereby gaining inspiration, finds himself equal to a second attempt at conversation.

"She's growed, marm, like the mischief!" he asserts; "but I knowed her, I *did*, the minute I sot eyes on her out there in the mowin' lot! an' she knowed *me*, she did! Yes, yes, she knowed Peter; she knowed him. Poor old Peter! who don't hardly know himself nowerdays." Here Peter's voice gets husky, and, brushing away a dirty tear, with his greasy coat sleeve, he seems to await the issue. Peter Floome is downrightly the social antipodes of the lady of the homestead. Conventionally they do not stand side by side in the human group, but, like Swedenborg's un-

fraternal angels, "feet to feet." Yet in the artless harangue of this poor creature there is a touch of honest nature that at once makes them kin.

"And I, too, must know you, Peter," she says, cordially advancing and taking in her own clean palm his dirty hand.

Unable to express his appreciation of the honour thus conferred, Peter twirls his thumbs, ventures a side glance at Harmy, and, again utterly disparaged in his own eyes, looks uneasily at the floor.

Prompt to reconcile the cowed creature to himself, Miss Parker courteously says: "And now, Peter, you would, I think, like to go up to Reuben's bedroom and have a good wash. By and by Harmy shall give you tea, and then we must hear all about the pardon, and how you happened here, and what you mean to do with yourself, and what *we* can do for you. Come, Mabel, dear; Peter, you know, is *your* company. Show him up-stairs, my darling."

Again the small, soft hand is laid in the rough, brown paw, and Peter Floome, — in a state of absolute bewilderment as to his personal identity, — shuffles awkwardly off with

the delighted child. And what says Harmy Patterson to all this? "Here's a convict, a horrid convict," cries she, "and invited to tea, an' that child a huggin' an' kissin' him, in cold blood! Lord! Lord! what *is* the Parkers comin' to?" Here, unable further to pursue the fallen social fortunes of the house, Harmy covers her face with her checked apron and bursts into tears. Grieved at the discomfiture of her old servant and friend, Miss Parker essays a word of expostulation. She appeals to her hospitality, her humanity, reminds her of her professed discipleship of Him who "sat at meat" with the sinner. In vain! as well might she have addressed herself to Harmy's stone molasses jug, which, dropped from her grasp in the sudden shock of Peter's advent, now lies prone upon the kitchen floor. Foiled in her kindly endeavour, the mistress quietly withdraws. Harmy, left alone, sobs herself into a comparatively tranquil frame of mind. Coming to the rescue of her molasses jug, she carefully ascertains that no minute fracture is consequent upon the fall, and that no wasteful drop has exuded from the wooden stopper, and, forthwith, sets vigorously to, on a batch of soft gingerbread, whose manufac-

ture had been interrupted by the entrance of Peter Floome. While she stirs her cake, Harmy sighs, and profoundly resolves in her mind "the fitnesses." In her social lexicon a convict is a vile wretch. In her catechism he is given over to damnation from the foundation of the world — God-devoted to the very devil himself!

Miss Paulina Parker, in her chamber, washes her hands, and also ponders the "fitnesses." This starved outcast is her brother. She has taken him by the hand. Christian ethics demonstrate the fitness of this act. The hand was, no doubt, dirty. Yet, what matters it? Soap and water set one right again. Soap and water tell, too, upon Peter Floome, when, after a characteristically superficial ablution, he emerges from Reuben's bedroom, a trifle improved in complexion, but still a sorry specimen of humanity, and, escorted by May-blossom, is whisked out-of-doors, on a hasty tour of inspection. Led by this happy little creature (now holding his hand, now dropping it to run on and, turning, take in his effect, and then skip gayly in advance), Peter visits the chicken-coop, the beehive, the flower garden, the stables, and

the pig-pen, and, last of all, the apple orchard, now rosy-white with bloom.

There, reclined upon the grass, beneath the flowering boughs of a patriarch tree, Miss Paulina ere long comes upon the oddly matched pair. Peter, wreathed with buttercups and dandelions, and wearing his flowery honours like another "Bottom," sits beside his "Titania," who in fond infatuation "His amiable cheek doth coy."

"Pity," thinks the intruder, "to spoil so quaint a picture." The sun is, however, already low, and she calls her darling in from the dewfall. In the kitchen, Harmy has made reluctant preparations for Peter's inner man; grimly remarking to Mandy Ann (who has meantime returned from an errand at the store) that "it does go agin' her, to put on span clean table-cloths for sich creeturs, an' to waste good vittels where they can't no how be sensed." A convict being, at Mandy Ann's estimate, an ineligible, if not dangerous guest, as Peter and May-blossom enter at one door, she vanishes by another. Harmy dons her cape-bonnet, and marches stiffly into the kitchen garden, leaving the disreputable visitor to his child hostess.

Peter Floome had not figured at a tea-drinking for many a long year, and, naturally, his company manners are somewhat rusty. Possibly, his table etiquette (or, rather, his entire lack of it) might have shocked his too partial entertainer (who, with fine innate courtesy, has laid herself a cup and plate, and is keeping her guest in countenance by taking her own tea with him), had not his evident satisfaction in the meal entirely engrossed her mind, for (Harmy to the contrary, notwithstanding) Peter is inherently inclined to "sense good vittels." It is quaintly picturesque, this tea-drinking of "Bottom" and "Titania;" this odd contrast of loutishness and elegance, although (as I grieve to record) "Bottom" does absolutely ignore the butter-knife; does thrust his wet spoon into the sugar bowl; and, vigourously blowing his hot tea, in scorn of popular prejudice, lap the same from his slopping saucer, and shovel in the apple sauce with his knife-blade. "Titania's" pretty efforts to put "Bottom" at his ease are, indeed, a thing to behold; for, conscious of his own want of keeping with the unwonted occasion, Peter is, to the very last degree, awkward and abashed. Nevertheless,

the encouraging smiles of his small hostess carry him victoriously to the end of this harrowing experience. Other social exigencies yet await this much-tried man. Directly after tea, he is taken by May-blossom to that inner sanctuary, Miss Parker's parlour, where, amid oppressively elegant surroundings, he is further weighed to earth by the disparaging sense of his own abjectness.

Prison life, on the solitary plan, is not conducive to colloquial glibness, nor is Peter Floome habitually garrulous. Many cups of Harmy's strong green tea have, however, limbered his tongue, and, once he is well seated, and has made a final, though terribly unsatisfactory, disposal of his long arms and obtrusive legs, he finds himself sufficiently at ease for narrative effort, and, at the request of his gracious hostess, wades desperately into his subject.

"I s'pose now, marm," he begins, "that you dun'·know as my real name ain't Peter Floome. · No more, either, does this pretty little creetur. The Ballous, you see (Ephryam Ballou's *my* name), was allers stuck on theirselves, an' when it come to prison, I says to myself, anyhow, *I* won't spile the fambly-tree,

so I got put down anonermous-like on them prison books, an' Ephe Ballou ain't never been heerd on to the "palace," you bet. Its twenty-three years, come next fall, marm, sence I sot Hiram Hall's barn afire. I was mighty peppery in them days, an' Hiram an' me, we had a fallin' out. He served me darned mean, Hiram did, an' my dander was up an' so was his'n, an' we had it hot an' heavy, an' (savin' your presence, marm, an' hern) I told Hiram I'd give him h—l some day. After that, I cooled off some, and went home. I was pretty riley yit, though, an' all supper-time I sot thinkin' to myself how I'd come up with that d—d blasted sneak. That's what I called him then, marm, fur I'd had a leetle too much old cider, an' didn't feel like pickin' out my words. 'By jiminy!' says I to myself, 'I've got it now! I'll hide in Hiram's barn, an', when folks is turned in, I'll jest let the critters out, and set fire to the old shebang! That'll plague him fust-rate.' Well, arter supper, I sez to mother, sez I, 'I'm goin' to be out middlin' late to-night, mother, an' you better not set up for me. Put the key under the door-mat, an' I'll be all right,' sez I.

"Poor old mother!" continued Peter, reflectively, and lowering his voice. "Arter that I *was* out; and a long while, too, an' she sot up fur me, mother did. Bless her patient old soul! Yes, yes, she sot up fur her bad boy jest five year an' six months, an' then her old heart broke, an' she turned in for good an' all, mother did, an' I could n't so much as see her kivered up!"

Here Peter is fain to take breath and heart, and Miss Paulina (herself in tears) comforts May-blossom, who is sobbing aloud. After this pathetic interruption, Peter, apparently composed by a prolonged fit of sneezing, regains the thread of his narrative.

"'Scuse me, marm," he apologizes, "I b'leeve thinkin' o' mother I got a leetle grain ahead o' my story, but, as I sed, I 'd made up my mind how to come up with Hiram, an' that night I got ahead on him sure afore he locked up, for there I was, stowed away in his haymow, as slick as grease! Well, jest as the Presberteren meetin'-house time struck 'leven, I crep' down to the stalls, turned out the cow an' the horse, an' druv 'em down to the medder lot; then I walked back, put a match er two under the mow, an' made tracks fer hum.

Well," sighed Peter, "the rest on it 's an ugly story, marm, an' p'r'aps you druther this innocent little creetur should n't hear it." Mayblossom is now "all ears," and Miss Parker, signifying her assent, Peter goes on. "Well, 'bout 'leven the wind riz, an' afore that barn got well agoin' it blowed a perfect harrycane, an' them sparks was a flyin' like the mischief! 'Lord help us,' sez I, looking out my bedroom winder, 's'pos'n' it kerries 'em as fur 's Hiram's house!' An' sure 'nuff, it *did;* an' it bein' a dry spell, the ruff blazed up like tinder! I was there in a jiffy, helpin' on' em git out the truck. I 'd got all over my huff now. I was sober as a jedge, an' I 'd 'a' gin my head for a football to had that night's work undid! Well, there was lots o' furnitoor in the house, an' Hiram he was a graspin' man, an' bound to git the hull on it out, an' arter it got too hot fur the rest on us, he hung on, an' — well — the last time he went in, he *stayed.* Poor Hiram! I could e'en a'most have changed places with him; for arter *that,* I wa' n't no ways sot on livin'. I knowed I wa' n't nothin' less than a murderer, an' I wa' n't easy nowhere, 'specially to hum, where mother was round, settin' as much store by me as ever. Well, by'm by,

when folks got wind o' my havin' a spat with Hiram, an' his owin' on me, they put this an' that together, an' I was took up for arson; an' I can't say as I was sorry, neither.

"Well, to make short on 't, I was nigh about hung; but the governor, he stepped in at the last minnit, an' sent me to State Prison for life. When it come to that pass, 'I won't disgrace the fam'ly,' sez I. 'The Ballous figgered pooty well in the revelooshing,' sez I, 'an' that name sha' n't never be writ in the prison 'count book, ef I kin hinder it.' So, es I 've told you, marm, I had myself writ down as Peter Floome. I had n't no nigh relations 'cept mother and sister Betsy. Uncle George's family 'd settled in Illi*noise*, an' we did n't hear from 'em once in a dog's age. Betsy was a young gal then an' had a beau. She was allus pooty toppin', an' sez I, 'it don't stan' to reason she 'll be comin' to the State Prison to see her *own* brother; but there 's mother,' sez I, '*she 'll* come reg'lar, I reckon; same 's she did to the *jail;*' so I writ her a letter, an' gin her word how I was, an' who she must ask arter in case she come. Bless her dear old soul!

"The very next Friday, there she was on

the spot! Arter that, reg'lar as clock work, once in three months, rain or shine, there was mother!

"Mothers, you see, marm, never misses. Wives, an' sisters, an' children, now an' then do keep up to the mark, but mothers, on the hull, is about the only reg'lar prison stan' bys. Well, mother sot a good deal o' store by me, an' when I see her gittin' thin, I knowed what fretted her, an' sez I to myself, 'she won't hold out forever, an' when she's gone, the Lord help *me!*'

"Well," continued Peter, huskily, "by 'm by she *went*, mother did; but (dropping his voice to a confidential whisper) mothers is master hands to hang on, an' no mistake! An' sure's you're 'live, ef she did n't keep right on with them visits! jest as reg'lar as ef nothin' hed turned up! Ev'ry time the quarter come round, on a Friday night, jest as the clock struck one, there stood mother, large as life, at the gratin' o' my cell. She never once opened her head; but, when I see her stan' there so smilin' an' pleasant, I sez to myself, 'she's done frettin', anyhow;' an', though I warn't never no great hand at prayin', I *did* thank God for *that*. I never let on 'bout them

visits, for 'bout that time things got pesky upside down with me, an' the boys they used to say, 'Peter 's cranky.' 'So,' sez I, 'ef I was to tell 'um, they would n't none on 'em b'leeve me.' An' I jest kep' dark, an' year arter year mother come reg'lar, an' we had it all to ourselves. By'm by Hiram, *he* come. Not reg'lar, like mother did, but off an' on. Well, ghosts is poor company, marm; an' arter a while I got clean upsot, and wa' n't wurth an old shoe.

"But I 'm gittin' kinder ahead o' my story. Arter mother died, Betsy she thawed out some, an' come to see me twice, an' then she got married an' went to Californy. She writ one or two letters to me an' I answered 'em punctooal, but by 'm by she left off writin', an' I knew *she'd* gin me up. An' then I got sorter cross-grained an' callous; an' sez I to myself, 'what 's the odds anyhow, it can't last to all etarnity; an' by 'm by I 'll go out o' this, feet fust, an' I hope 't 'ill be the last o' me.'"

"But Peter, my poor fellow," piously interposes Miss Parker, "you read the Bible sometimes, I trust, and found some comfort there; you could n't have doubted God's providence,

all His blessed promises to the penitent and believing soul?"

"Why, yes'm," responds Peter; "I read my Bible *some*, purty reg'lar, too, 'long at fust; an' mother bein' a church-member, I was brung up to set on providence 'en sich like; but them promises you tell on works best outside o' prisons; an' 'long 'bout the time I got upsot, I 'd gin up readin' even in the Bible; for 't wa' n't no use; the letters all stood wrong eend up. I *did* hang on to providence a spell, but by 'm by, I see *that* wa' n't no use, nuther. 'Providence,' sez I, 'don't take no 'count o' *me*, an' I may as well try to jog along on my own hook.'

"Well, finally, I was took down with roomatic fever, an' went into the hospital a spell; an' arter I got round agin, I wa' n't strong enough to go back to the shoe shop, an' the doctor said a change would set me up agin. Twelve year I 'd ben a workin' there at the same bench, an' one day exactly like t'other, till it 'peared to me as ef I was a sewin' one 'tarnal everlastin' shoe, over an' over, an' back an' forth, an' no mortal hope o' comin' to the eend on 't in this world or next. An' when they sot me to runnin' arrants in the

prison, an' doin' chores fur the warden's folks, I was mighty glad, I tell you! An' things kinder got right eend up agin. 'T wa' n't long arter that, afore this dear little creetur come to town. Children *air* strange now, ain't they, marm? Would you b'leeve that, afore that child could set alone, she took a reg'lar shine to *me!* I *was* beat, I tell you! An' when I felt them two little arms 'round my old neck, things somehow lifted up like; an' though I did n't go to prayer-meetin', and did n't ezackly git religin, as some on 'em do, I took a reg'lar hitch on to the Almighty; 'fur,' sez I, 'it's right down handsome in Him to send a blessed little angel to sich a place as this.' Fur she was a reg'lar angel to us, a growin' up there, so innocent, purty an' lovin'; an' she did our souls a heap more good than all the chaplain's Sunday sermons; an' when the boss got killed, an' you took her off, it seemed as ef there wa' n't nothin' left. I s'pose I took on, to myself, a leetle too hard, fur arter I 'd had one or two poor spells, the doctor he overhauled me, an' I heered him say there was trouble with the heart; an' sez I to myself, 'you 're right there *is!*' Next day as I was cleanin' up his office, the warden asked me 'bout my

folks; an' how long I 'd ben to the prison, an' how long I 'd got to stay, an' so I told him, nigh as I could, the hull story, 'cept 'at I did n't let on 'bout mother, an' them reg'lar visits. He would n't 'a' b'leeved me, you see, an' besides, I never did like to let on much about *her*.

"Well, that was long in the neighbourhood o' Fast Day; an' now an' then on holidays, marm, as p'r'aps you know, the gov'nor makes a p'int to pardon a prisoner; an' when the warden gits up them days in chapel, with a paper in his hand, we know what 's comin', an' some hearts there gives awful thumps, I tell you! There 's lots of 'em, you see, has hopes, havin' folks a tryin' fur 'em outside, or bein' took up by the prayer-meetin' or the inspectors; but I had n't eny hopes; so that day when the warden riz, with his pardon, an' begun to make a speech, I sot there as unconcerned as ever.

"'Twenty-two years ago,' sez he, 'one of your number in a state of intoxication committed a great crime, an' was sentenced for life to this prison. Durin' these twenty-two years,' sez he, 'he hain't sot foot outside these walls; an' durin' the hull o' that time,' sez he,

'he hain't once ben reported for bad conduct. In his sober moments he 's allers ben sorry fur his crime,' sez he, 'an' now he 's a worn-out old man, an' I have spoken in favour of his pardon. His name,' sez he, 'is Peter Floome.'

"By the Moses, marm! when I heerd *my* name called, ef I wa' n't beat! Well, I riz up to go forrard. My knees was mighty shaky, an' the chapel was spinnin' round like sixty. I heerd 'em clappin' on me, an' then, well, that pardon was a leetle too much for me; an' I jest up an' fainted dead away. Arter a spell they brung me to; an' arter riggin' me out in a bran-new coat an' weskitt an' trowsis, they brung me into the guard-room. Well, there was the warden, the chaplain, an' the deputy, an' lots o' folks, an' all as smilin' as a basket o' chips. Lots on 'em shook hands with me, an' wished me joy. A tall man in a long, black coat, an' green specs, was a stannin' along side o' the warden. He was powfell glad to see me, an' gin me lots o' good advice (out o' the Scriptures, I should say), though I did n't ezackly sense, bein' cumflustered like. Arter that, I got leave to say good-by to some o' the boys; an' then the warden he sent fur me to come into his office, an' there

was two of the inspectors, an' the chaplain, an' the State agent, an' the chap in the long coat an' the goggles, as big as life.

"Well, each on 'em talked a spell to me, an' treated me, on the hull, I should say, considerable han'some. An' the tall man he gin some more d'rections 'bout my behaviour. Some on it, I took it, was his own words, an' some on 't was Bible, an' sounded mighty han'some. The State agent he gin me the four dollars a comin' to me from the State; an' sez he, 'when you've made up your mind what you're goin' to do, come to my office, Peter, en I 'll do what I kin fer ye.' An' arter he 'd gin me a card with the street an' number o' his place on 't, I shook hands all round agin, an' off I goes. Lord bless you! Marm, when I gits outside that prison ef I ain't e'en a'most as helpless as a baby! an' where to go to, or how to go at all, is more 'n *I* knowed! Howsumdever, I kinder scooted off, best way I could; for thinks I, I 'll git over to Boston and put up to a tavern there, where folks don't know me, an' 't won't leak out 'bout my havin' ben in prison. So I goes on, an' arter I turned the corner, an' got into another street, an' walked on a piece, somebody steps

up behind me, an' teches me on the shoulder. 'Lord,' thinks I, 'what *is* comin' now!' but I jest turned round square ter face the music; an' who should I see but Mr. Holt, my old instructor in the shoe shop! An' sez he, 'Peter,' sez he, 'I want you to go 'long o' me. You 'll make a poor fist on 't jest now, goin' round streets alone. You come to my house a spell,' sez he. I *was* glad, I tell you, marm. Well, I staid to his house three weeks in all, an' durin' that time got sorter steady in my head, an' used ter goin' round loose.

"Well, arter goin' to his office five times, I ketched the State agent in, one day. He knew me right off, like a book; but he was awful busy, an' could n't talk to me but a minute. I told him I had a own uncle an' some fust cousins out to Illi*noise*, an' I reckoned I 'd go out there an' stay a spell, ef he 'd a mind to put me through. Sez he, 'I can send you as fur as Buffalo, Peter, an' arter you git there, you 'll mebbe git a job an' make enough to carry you on to your folks. The West 'll be the makin' on you. It's the very place for you convicts,' sez he. So he gin me a ticket, an' hustled me off.

"Well, I went home to Mr. Holt's, an' we

talked it over, that night, an' next day he went to Boston with me an' clean over to the deep*ott* to put me into the right keer, an', arter thankin' on him a thousand times, I set out for Buffalo. But, Lord a massy, marm! how them keers does scoot! It 's 'nuff to take away your breath — to say nothin' o' yer senses. Arter a while we come to a stop an' I wa' n't a bit sorry. 'I 'll git off a spell,' sez I, 'an' kinder stiddy my head, an' stretch my legs, while the ingine 's restin'.' The railroad hed n't come our way till arter I was shet up, so I was middlin' clumsy round keers, an' goin' down them pesky high steps, I gin my left ankle a turn, an' out it goes! I sot down a minnit; folks was goin' an' comin', but nobody twigged me. Arter a spell, I riz up, an' hobbled inside the deep*ott* buildin', an' jest as I was takin' off my shoe an' stockin' to look at the damage, that plaggy keer-man blowed his whistle, an' afore you could say Jack Robinson, off went them divilish keers, an' me left in the lurch, with a ticket that sez '*good for this trip only!*' 'O Lord,' sez I, 'what *shall* I do! Fust thing,' sez I,' I 'll count my cash;' so I took out my little wallet, an' there was the four dollars 'at the State agent 'lowed

me, an' ten dollars 'at Mr. Holt gin me the day I cum off.

"Well, arter I thought it over, I put on my shoe and stockin', an' sung out to a feller who 'peared to be hangin' 'round for a job, an', sez I, 'Mister, this here ankle's awful; an' I 'll be obleeged to you, ef you 'll take me to the tarvern; an' mebbe, as we go 'long, you would n't mind stoppin' at the 'poth'cary shop to let me git a bottle o' Opedildock?'

"Well, to git to the eend o' my long story, that ankle, marm, laid me up a hull week; an', by the time I got round agin, my cash was 'bout gone. My ticket wa' n't no arthly valloo, nuther. So I gin up Illinoise, paid the damages to the tarvern, bought a lot o' crackers an' cheese, an' sot out on my travels, dead broke. I guess 't wa' n't more 'n ten miles from Boston where I bust my ankle; but I made up my mind not to ask no questions, fur, sez I, 'Peter, 't won't do to show your ignorance, ef you do 't may leak out 'bout the prison.'

"Fust, I thought I 'd look 'round for a job; but I *durs n't*, fur folks would naterly want to know where I come from, an' ef the boys got wind o' my bein' a convict, they 'd prob'ly

holler arter me, an' p'rhaps set the dogs on me. So I jest shet my head tight, an' sot out.

"I 'd ben travellin' 'bout two days when my grub gin out, an', long in the arternoon o' the third day, I come in sight o' this here buildin'. Thinks I ter myself, 'I can't drag on much furder, anyhow, an' it does look mighty pooty there in that green lot with the yallar buttercups a bloomin' all round. I reckon I better tumble over them bars,' sez I, 'an' lay down a spell under that big warnut tree. Mebbe,' sez I, 'I sha'n't git up in a hurry (fur I was clean beat out), but 't ain't no matter,' sez I, 'there 's folks close by, an' when my troubles is over, they 'll find me layin' a top o' the buttercups, an' they can't do no less 'n put me *under* 'em.' You see, marm, livin' behind the bars, a feller gits shaky on Providence, and I did n't once suspicion 'at Providence was bringin' me to the right shop; 'at I was makin' a bee-line fur the only creetur in the hull world 'at would n't turn the cold shoulder on me. So, when I clim over them bars, I could n't (beggin' the Almighty's pardon) ha' flipped a cent fer my miserable old life. When I laid down under the warnut tree, I felt kinder drowsy-like, an'

so I shet my eyes; but the birds, they was singin' like all possessed, an' the grass smelt sweet as new butter, an' I had n't seen a mowin' lot risin' o' twenty year. So I riz up on my elbow, to take a squint 'round, an' there, not more 'n ten rods off, I seed this blessed little angel a pickin' buttercups. She 'd grown, marm, but I knowed her, fur all that, the minnit I sot eyes on her. 'T ain't nateral I *should n't*, when there ain't another like her in God's world. Yes, I knowed her, an' she knowed me, she did, though when I sot straight up, an' kinder coughed, she gin a leetle start. An' then I sez to myself, 'O Lord! she 's goin' to run away! As sure as the world, she 's afeared of her poor old Peter, 'at used to tote her in his arms!' But she did n't *run*. She jest turned round an' gin me a good look, an' then she claps her two hands, she does, an' sez she, 'Peter! Peter! it *is* Peter!' an' runs straight up to me, with her cheeks as pink as roses, an' puts her two arms 'round my miser'ble old neck. An' then, marm, I broke right down, an' cried like a baby. But I did n't want to make her pooty little heart ache, so I wiped up, an' told her all 'bout the pardon, an' 'bout the folks

over to the "palace" (that's *our* name, marm, for the prison), an' it 'peared to me she'd never git through askin' questions 'bout one or 'nother, for bein' brung up in the prison, she kinder took to us, though we do seem poor shucks to *you*, I reckon. Use is everything, an' no matter how bad convicts is, they all sot the world by *her*. Well, arter we'd talked a spell, an' I'd et a hunk o' gingerbread she gin me, I perked up, an' told her I'd go along home with her; 'fur,' sez I, 'I *can't* leave her now, nohow. I've ben starvin' too long for the sight on her,' sez I. So here I am, marm, an' you know the rest.

"Mebbe you'd know some place 'round here where I could do chores for my vittels, or p'r'aps you'd giv' me a job yourself, an then I'd git a look at this little creetur every day, sartin sure. 'Scuse me, marm, ef I make too free ("Titania" had crept close to "Bottom and was fondly stroking his hand); but I kerried her in my arms a long spell, an' habit's second natur."

Peter's long story concluded, Miss Paulina kindly assured him that he should not yet be sent far away from his pretty nursling. Already, she had determined where to bestow

him for the night. In the rambling old garden stood a small, nondescript erection, supposed to have served, in remote times, as a summer-house, and though now appropriated to the safe-keeping of garden tools, still weather-tight and easily convertible into a sleeping-place, for an unambitious guest. With this energetic lady, to will was to do. And, with the help of Reuben's strong arm, and the half-reluctant aid of Mandy Ann, who had consented to leave for a time the sheltering four walls of her attic bedroom, the tool-house was cleared up and made clean. A light cot-bed was conveyed hither, and duly furnished for Peter's occupancy, and, with his last lingering look devouring May-blossom, he was escorted by Reuben to his new quarters. There, a cup of hot coffee, a generous plate of biscuits, and a clean nightcap awaited him. And, installed in these comparatively elegant lodgings, we leave him to sound sleep, and happy dreams.

Harmy's pet bantam had long since crowed in a new day, and Harmy herself had been two full hours astir, when Peter Floome, rubbing his old eyes, awoke from untroubled slumber. Essaying to rise, and with one foot

already planted on the floor, he becomes painfully aware of his inability to do so. A small, round table, the summer-house settee, and chairs reel tipsily in their places. The diamond-paned window wavers before his eyes, the very walls of the apartment seem like —

> "The ancient House of Usher,
> Tottering to their fall,"

and, catching the general impulse, he, too, lets go his centre of gravity, and falls fainting across the bed. Half an hour later, Peter awakes to conscious life, and an overwhelming smell of camphor. Harmy Patterson, not without evidence of strong repulsion, bends desperately over him. Her expression, in the main, is that of solemn determination. She is "bringing him to." This accomplished, she stiffly beckons to Reuben (who stands "watching afar off"), and, signifying her desire to wash her hands of this disreputable patient, commits Peter to his care, and grimly retires.

Miss Paulina is hastily interviewed, and informed of the convict's "faint spell," and his subsequent "bringin' to." And Harmy, forthwith, expresses her decided conviction

that "it's ketchin', an' she should n't a bit wonder if the hull family was took down with it," and, furtively suggesting the "poorhouse," she withdraws to the more momentous concerns of her kitchen. There she sends cold shivers down Mandy Ann's back, by a recountal of the late occurrence. "I hain't," she declares, "had a wink of sleep the whole blessed night, a thinkin' of that horrid convict, an' not knowin' what might happen, with sich creeturs 'round. At four o'clock I come down and went into the garden to settle my mind, an' pull a few cherry reddishes for breakfast. I jest stepped down to the summer-house a minute, to take a good look 'round, and there was the door wide open!"

Feelin' (as she averred) in her bones that the creetur might ha' gone off in the night with the pillow-case and towels in his trowsers' pocket, she had (to make assurance doubly sure) stepped over the threshold, with them cherry reddishes in her apron, an' her heart a beatin' like a mill-clapper. And, raisin' her two hands, she had let go her apron, an' them reddishes had gone rollin' every which way, while she gin such a screech that Reuben heered it, way off in the cow-yard, and nigh

about jumped out of his skin. The hired man arriving on the scene, she had said, "Reuben, is he gone?" and, loosing his shirt collar, Reuben had made answer, "Gone? no, he 's alive an' kickin', you bet. Run git the camfire, Harmy, an' don't disturb the folks. *You 'll* fetch him 'round ef ennybody kin." How her camfire, strong enough to bear up an egg, had at length brung the miser'ble creetur round, to give 'em all some dretful sickness he 'd ketched, etc., etc.

Mandy Ann's fascinated attention, and her lively alternations of horror and surprise during the above recital, this feeble pen may not describe. Miss Paulina, meantime, visiting the summer-house, detects no evidence of fever in Peter's system, and is convinced that the poor body's ailment is not, as Harmy opines, "ketchin'." Kindly looking after his comfort, she relieves Reuben's watch, and forthwith despatches him for Doctor Foster, who in due time looks in upon the strange patient, and pronounces his sudden illness an attack of heart disease. "Twenty-two years of hopeless toil," declares the good doctor, "short commons, and vitiated air, have damaged the poor human machine beyond repair;

and, though it may run a while longer, don't be surprised if it stops any day, and without notice." The doctor rides away on his morning round; Miss Paulina gives May-blossom her late breakfast, and, with many careful admonitions, allows her to go to Peter, who now — tolerably recovered — "is receiving" in an old Boston rocker, hunted up for his special use; and in which, sitting bolt upright, he rocks with indescribable relish, assuring May-blossom that "it's the very spawn o' mother's own rockin'-cheer, an' makes him feel as ef he was right in the old chimbly corner, to hum."

While Peter rocks and chats with his little visitor, the good lady of the house, turning over his affairs in her mind, thus soliloquises: "Poor creature, as Doctor Foster says, he 'll not trouble any one long. He loves my precious child. Why should I part the two? — both, alas! going the same sad road. The summer-house could easily be made habitable. He could live there, quite by himself — at least till cold weather sets in. The cost of his maintenance I can well spare from my abundance. The neighbours, to be sure, will object; and there 's Harmy to be reconciled;

but what is to become of the forlorn, shelterless creature, if I turn my back on him? What indeed (with a resolute nod, and thinking aloud)! My mind is made up. He shall stay. Right is right. One is sure of that; and Providence takes care of the rest."

In accordance with this resolve, Peter Floome, that very day, goes to housekeeping. A Lilliputian laundry-stove, with an improvised flue, is set up in the summer-house by the tinman. An old cupboard, *vis-à-vis* with the stove, is scoured, and well stocked with provisions and cooking utensils, and a sufficiency of homely table and other furniture is placed at his disposal; and Peter literally groans under "an embarrassment of riches." A box of coal is also appropriated to his use, and, when he receives permission to chop for himself unlimited kindlings from Miss Paulina's teeming woodpile, tears of grateful joy trickle down the worn old cheeks of Peter Floome. From the luxurious depths of his Boston rocker, he watches dazedly these munificent preparations for his housekeeping, declaring over and over to May-blossom (who is in an equal state of delight), that "this does beat the Dutch, an' he never, an' it's

jest like bein' took up by one o' them fairy godmothers in the story-book!" But when actually *measured* by the Saganock tailor, he is subsequently arrayed in a pair of trousers, cut with especial reference to his own clumsy legs, and a coat which, though coarse and homely, has not been fashioned without some slight reference to the dimensions of its wearer; a bran-new necktie, and a decent straw hat, not to mention a clean print shirt (of the latter, there is a magnificent reserve of five others, equally new and clean), his admiration and wonderment, and May-blossom's pride in him, are absolutely indescribable. Even Harmy herself, softened by this metamorphosis of the fairy godmother, becomes distantly amicable, scarcely recognising in this decent old body the objectionable being of her sometime suspicion and aversion. After the lapse of an entire week, she grimly remarks to Reuben that "she hain't missed nothin' yit, tho', to be sure, its awful resky havin' sich creeturs 'round."

Peter Floome, though he takes a whole bottle of Doctor Foster's drops, never quite rallies from that first grave attack of his fatal disease. May-blossom, too, is more ailing.

Peter's advent at the homestead, with its attendant excitement, has been too much for the delicate little frame. Already those deceitful tokens of convalescence, so cheering to Miss Paulina's heart, have disappeared. Before the summer roses go, it is plain to all, that, ere long, death will claim for his own this bud that "never will become a rose."

Miss Paulina hears the graveyard pines wailing in weary monotone, while, gliding serenely beneath the sapphire heaven of June, the river repeats the mournful undersong. Alas, and alas, that ever life, and death, and true love should dwell side by side in this goodly world! Faithful old Peter, never wearying in his love-labour, bears hither and thither, in careful arms, the wasted young form, now too feeble to bear its own light weight. On pleasant days he conveys it tenderly from couch to garden. For it is still May-blossom's delight to swing dreamily in a low hammock, hung from the stout boughs of two gigantic elms, sometimes thinking to herself, oftener confiding her innocent dreams to Peter, or Miss Paulina. Often her thought goes back to the gray old prison. Loving memories of her child-life, and tender reminis-

cences of shabby old friends in that dreary abode, are still with her. To this young, gladsome creature, not yet replete with its sweet new wine, existence is still infinitely dear; and, though Death is coming, she does not hasten to meet him, but, turning her face lifeward, lives (as in God's mercy it befalls many a dying one to live) in the sweet, brief to-day. And well it is, for the coffin and the tomb, even to the "life undone," are not things to brood upon.

While Peter Floome, armed and equipped with a splint fly-brush of his own clumsy manufacture, presides, dragon-like, over the out-door siestas of his enchanted princess, the summer grows old, and it behooves us to look after the ex-convict's housekeeping. Harmy Patterson, has, to be sure, anticipated us, and, as a result of her observations, has long since averred that "it 's awful to see that man mess 'round, an' spill grease on the summer-house floor!" And, indeed, even to the unprejudiced eye, it is painfully apparent that Nature, in fashioning Peter Floome, had not in her "mind's eye" a cook, or a housewife, or even a scullion. Although no one could be more willingly helpful, he is so clumsy of

touch at all indoor employment, save the gentle tendance of May-blossom, that one half inclines to the fantastic supposition that this exceptional aptness may be the result of some preexistent experience of Peter as child's-nurse.

Peter's gentle inoffensiveness, his ever-respectful deference to Harmy's wishes, and Harmy's judgment, and, above all, his idolatrous devotion to "that blessed lamb, May-blossom," bid fair, at last, to overcome even Harmy's social prejudices. One morning, when the poor man is ailing, and for a day or two has been "sloppy, poky, and messy," beyond his wont, the good woman is encountered by Miss Parker on her way to the summer-house, bearing a breakfast-tray, fit to serve a king. Colouring, as if detected in some covert derogatory act, Harmy apologetically observes that, "when folks is sick, you can't stan' by an' see 'em suffer, an what-*ever* they air, dropped eggs, an' muffins, an' broma 'll do 'em no harm. As for men-folks," asserts she, "they never *be* fit to cook an' do for theirselves, an' p'r'aps, arter all, 't would be a savin' to the family ef she was to see to his vittels right along."

In these frugal and humane sentiments her mistress hastily concurs; and, henceforth, Harmy *does* "see to his vittels;" thereby vastly bettering the sanitary condition of poor Peter, whose "messes," whatever other excellence they may boast, are *not* anti-dyspeptic. Peter, like most of his sex, especially open to the seductions of the cuisine, is deeply impressed with the domestic worth of his caterer, and, in confidential discourse with Reuben, admiringly observes that "Miss Patterson's cookin' does beat the Dutch; an' for scourin' a floor he never see her ekal; an' ef she 'd 'a' got hitched in her younger days, what a wife she 'd 'a' made!"

Having thus put Peter's kitchen to rights, Harmy suggests to herself the practicability of correcting a certain irregularity in his conduct, "which has (as she expresses it) ben a weighin' on her mind quite a spell."

As this is a reform not to be undertaken lightly or single-handed, she determines to make an alliance with Reuben; and to this effect, one moonlight evening when the two are quite alone, she takes the hired man into her confidence. "For," says the good woman, "I put it to you, now, an' bein' old enough

to be your mother, sich things is no harm between us, Reuben. I put it to you, ef it don't seem scand'lus for a man to ondress, an' git into bed with his door wide open, an' a decent woman overlookin' on him from her bedroom winder? To be sure, I never once turn my eyes his way, but I can't help sensin' on it, an' 's true 's you 're alive, Reuben, ef he don't sleep there night arter night, with his door stretched, right afore my face!"

"P'r'aps he wants air," pleads Reuben, in excuse.

"Then why on airth," returns Harmy, "don't he open his winder! Now, Reuben, to please me, do go this very night an' shet that door. Ef folks don't know what manners is, it 's best to give 'em a hint, *I* say, an', ten to one, he won't be the wiser fur it till mornin', fur, to my knowledge, he 's been abed a hull hour by the kitchen clock."

Thus urgently besought, and willing to oblige, Reuben steps gingerly down the garden path, and, reassured by the heavy snores within, softly closes the summer-house door. He is about to retrace his steps when, bounce upon the floor, comes Peter Floome! Open goes the door with a bang, and a voice, so

energetically fierce that Reuben turns upon his heel to assure himself that the speaker is really Peter, angrily exclaims, "No, you *don't*, now! Hain't I ben shet up like a dog in a kennel night arter night fur twenty-two year, say? An' what the d—l 's the use o' pardonin' a man out, ef you can't give him the swing o' his own bedroom door?"

Reuben, who relishes a bit of humour, details to his mistress, on the morrow, this unsuccessful attempt of Harmy to compel Peter's respect to the proprieties. Miss Paulina, kindly wise, decides in favour of the open door, and thereafter, Peter, like "him that hath the key of David, openeth, and no man shutteth." The intense satisfaction of this cell-worn creature in his open door is, indeed, a thing to contemplate, and, touched, no doubt, by the homely pathos of the bowed, motionless figure sitting (often far into the night) in his low doorway, bathed in the tender beauty of the summer moonlight, or sharply projected on the darkness in momentary silhouette, by lurid flashes of summer lightning, Harmy herself is at length modified, and tacitly condones Peter's bold breach of decorum.

Through long disuse of the power of speech,

Peter Floome has become habitually taciturn. His protracted fits of almost dogged silence are, however, relieved by equally abnormal attacks of garrulousness. In these moods he holds long and confidential discourse with Reuben. On a summer evening, seated in his humble doorway, he will recount for his entertainment such bits of prison gossip, or such incidents of prison life, as have retained their hold on his failing memory. Often on these occasions a dash of the old cynicism gives pungency to his speech, but, ordinarily, he is amiably at one with destiny, and at peace with himself and his neighbour. Behold him to-night, already in his talking-cap. Harmy and Mandy Ann are seated upon the summer-house steps; Reuben, wearied by a long day's haying, is reclining lazily upon the grass; Peter, meantime, is graciously intent in serving up for the three his most relishing prison tidbits. Harmy, being rheumatic, does not often grace these out-door assemblages with her august presence; "but to-night," as she herself explains, "havin' a longin' for a breath of fresh air, she jest strolled into the garden, an' thought she might as well set down with 'em and rest a spell." Peter's audience se-

cured, he opens his budget of prison reminiscence and rehearses a long, heart-breaking drama, at which Harmy pulls out her handkerchief, and complains of a cold in her head, while Mandy Ann sobs outright, and Reuben himself is detected in an audible sniff.

"'T ain't a lively yarn, I 'll 'low," apologizes the narrator, "an', p'r'aps, I had n't oughter told it to you wimmin folks. Well, we 've all got to go when our time comes; an' death ain't the wust thing in the world, no, not by a jug full! An', whenever the Almighty summons us, I hope we 'll all face the music, an' go off with flyin' colours."

Harmy, who considers Peter's similes objectionably secular, here suggests, as an appropriate lesson, the parable of the ten virgins, and advises Reuben and Mandy Ann to "jine the church, an' have their lamps trimmed an' burnin' when the bridegroom cometh."

Peter, ignoring the parable, irreverently observes that "all the Ballous had ben handsomely buried;" an', when his turn comes, all he asks is to hev a marble gravestone, with verses cut on to it, same as the rest o' his folks. As to what 's comin' after death (he philosophically avers), "'t ain't no use to worry

'bout that; fur it stan's to reason that the Lord ain't goin' to hang on to His creeturs, through thick an' thin, in *this* world, an' then go back on 'em in *t'other*."

Reuben, who is not reflective, here yawns audibly, and, expressing his intention to "turn in," bids them a drowsy good-night. The "wimmin folks" follow his lead, and Peter is left alone in his moonlit doorway.

"There never was," as Harmy repeatedly asserts to Mandy Ann, who is about retiring, "such a night; light enough to pick up a pin by the moon, an' too pleasant fur any mortal to think o' sleepin'!"

Leisurely setting her sponge for the morrow's baking, gathering up her silver, bolting the doors, and looking after the window-fastenings, the good woman reluctantly retires to her chamber.

Having no disposition for sleep, Harmy, half undressed, sits looking out upon the moonlit garden. Her mind is ill at ease. "We live in a dyin' world," she drearily soliloquises. "Here 's our May-blossom, now, poor blessed lamb! a growin' that weaker every day that it stan's to reason she can't last but a spell longer; an' Miss Paulina that bound up in

the child, that how *she's* goin' to stan' the partin' the Lord only knows! An' there's Peter, goin' round with that pesky onsartin' heart, liable to stop beatin', without a minnit's notice, eny day.

"To be sure, now," she retrospectively muses, "it *was* a cross las' spring to hev a convict brung right into the family; an' to see that child a hangin' on to him, an' a huggin' an' kissen on him, same's ef he was her own flesh and blood; but there (judicially and emphatically), I *will* say *that* fur him, though he's no end mussy an' sloppy about housework, and does hev scand'lous notions about his bedroom door, there ain't a grain o' real harm in Peter Floome; an' it's lots o' company to see him a settin' there nights in that summer-house doorway. Well, *he's* gone an' turned in, I see; an' it's 'bout time I follered suit, I guess."

The night wind is rising. It soughs rhythmically through the great pine, beside the west door, and sends a miniature snow-storm of syringa petals upon the garden walks.

It winnows spice-like odors from ancient clumps of clove-pink. Tall summer lilies, nodding drowsily upon their stems, breathe,

incense-like, upon the dewy air. Brooding birds twitter sleepily among the green Linden boughs; and, over it all, lies, like God's benediction, the wonderful glamour of the still white moonlight.

"Well," declares Harmy, giving voice to her thought, as she ties her nightcap strings, and takes one more good look at the garden; "I mus' say that the Lord 's put His creeturs into a han'some world; an' no mistake! I s'pose now," she adds, compunctiously, "that I 'm turrible wicked to *say* it, but, somehow, I can't jest see my way to believin' that things is fixed the way they 'd orter be. To *my* mind, it would 'er ben more to the pint to 'a' made all on us Methusalehs. It 's dretful upsettin' to hev to live in a *dyin' world*, no matter *how* pooty it is."

Still heavy with anxious foreboding, Harmy puts out her candle, and, presently, "dropping off," forgets in sleep the unsatisfactory arrangement of mundane affairs.

At early dawn she is aroused by the ringing of Miss Paulina's chamber bell; and, before she has got well into her gown, Mandy Ann comes to summons her to the bedside of Mayblossom. The child is fast sinking. Doctor

Foster is already here; but human help is of no avail. A hard coughing spell has been followed by a cruel hemorrhage, which has already drained her thin blue veins. Exhausted and unconscious she waits upon the border-line, betwixt life and death; and there, wringing Miss Parker's trembling hand, and pressing a last kiss upon the brow of the dying child, the good doctor leaves her to Him in whose hand are the issues of life and death.

All day long, with wide unseeing eyes "looking," as Harmy quaintly expresses it, "right straight up into heaven," May-blossom lies senseless upon her couch of white.

No priceless "last word" breaks the silence of her sweet folded lips. There is nothing more for hope to hang upon, not even the sad anticipation of a dying smile; and so the slow day wears on to night.

Miss Paulina — heart-broken — hangs over the dear unconscious form; and, in yonder corner ("how in the world Miss Paulina come to give her consent to his stayin' here sence mornin', without a mou'ful o' victuals an' drink, an' not so much as a word of notice for his best friends," Harmy Patterson cannot

opine; "but there! folks *will* do curos things sometimes; an' to see a man settin' that way, hour after hour, all doubled up, an' the tears a tricklin' down his shirt-front, *is* turrible tryin'!") sits Peter Floome. At midnight, Harmy persuades Miss Parker to "lop down a minnit; you 'll be all beat out afore the fun'al," she urges. "Do now hear to *me!* I 'm the oldest, Miss Pauly, an' hev seen lots o' sickness an' death in my day." Thus persuaded, the poor worn lady seeks her chamber, and is soon in a troubled, but heavy sleep. Harmy in a flowered "loose gown," wonderful in color and design, watches the death-bed of May-blossom. Peter Floome, silent, motionless, with bowed gray head, still holds his place — rejecting every advance of his comforter, who says irritably to herself, "Land sakes, I 'd 'bout as soon be stark alone!"

How still the night is! A mother robin, brooding her fledglings in the tall linden, beside the open window, twitters drowsily, from time to time. A persistent June bug, bouncing clumsily against wall and ceiling, wantons jarringly with the solemn silence. On the bureau stands May-blossom's own pet

vase — a Parian hand. It still holds a faded cluster of lady's delights, placed there, but yesterday, by her own sweet hand. The long July night wears on. Harmy, at regular intervals, steps softly to the bedside, and, bending tenderly over her charge, listens a while to the laboured breathing of the child, and then, with a stealthy side glance at the silent watcher,— whose presence, to *her* mind, but ill accords with the occasion, — returns to rock softly, and moan, under her breath, "Dear, dear, dear o' me! I s'pose it's the Lord's will; but, when I look at that precious child, I can't, nohow, help prayin' straight agin it! P'r'aps I may as well read a few chapters (taking a heavy Bible from a stand beside the fireplace); the Scripters is wonderful comfortin' in times of affliction."

And now, Harmy Patterson, — good old-fashioned Christian, never once doubting that God Himself literally penned every word between the covers of her "King James edition," — gets mightily edified and reassured by a pious perusal of the Book of Lamentations! Harmy likes long chapters, and many of them; and, having exhausted Lamentations, she reads on and on, until (if you

should put her to the rack, you could n't make her *confess* it) she falls fast asleep.

Hark! Is it the robin twittering in the linden? Ah, no! a sadder and more hopeless sound disturbs her repose. It is the death-rattle! A moment more, and she is hastening to the child. Peter Floome has already anticipated her; and, kneeling by the bedside, is clasping, in his rough brown palm, the slender white hand of his precious nursling. A cruel spasm convulses the tender frame. The little arms are up-flung in agony! A moment; and it has passed — thank God! the last mortal pang! And now the sweet Carrara marble face is lighted by a dawn that is not of earth. A smile of ecstasy sweetens the dying lips; and, as the conscious gray eyes look fondly upon the familiar bowed head beside her, she whispers in rapturous surprise: "Why, Peter! Peter! It is morning!" A faint gasp — a single flutter of the failing breath, and all is over. Harmy Patterson, bending her stiff old knees, grasps the hand of Peter Floome, and the two weep silently together. Peter's adoring gaze is still fastened upon the dear dead face, and, with his right hand still clasping that of May-blossom, he presses in his left

that of Harmy, and broken-heartedly wails: "Oh, Miss Patterson, Miss Patterson! the' ain't *nothin'* left!"

"It 's the will of the Lord, Peter," piously exhorts Harmy; "an' we must all bow down to it, an' bear up under it. But, O land, (rising abruptly to her feet)! how in the world I 'm to break it to Miss Paulina (an' she not here at the last minnit) is more 'n *I* know; but I must *do* it, an' right off, *too*." And, leaving her fellow-mourner still upon his knees, she hurries from the room on her distasteful errand. Harmy, in spite of her best intentions, delays awhile. "It 's a pity" — she says to herself — "to wake her up to her trouble, and she so sound, an' quiet. I 've a mind to let her lay a minnit longer." And she *does*, but, ere long, the two women are beside the dear dead form. Miss Paulina — true to her own sweet self — holds in abeyance the sorrow of her aching heart, while she kindly seeks to comfort the poor bowed creature still clinging to his beloved nursling. Tenderly clasping his disengaged hand, she strives with gentle force to draw him from the room. The hand is nerveless, and chill. The entire form seems strangely limp and list-

less! The truth at last dawns upon her — "Peter Floome is dead!" Yes, his fond, faithful spirit, following hard upon the flight of that —

"Little fair soul that knew not sin,"

had gone softly and painlessly out of mortal life; and who shall say that, in the "house of many mansions," the convict, "delivered from the body of his sin," may not dwell, side by side, with the innocent prison child?

Rough-handed men come, with heavy tread, to bear the dead man from the room, but it is Miss Paulina, herself, who tenderly disengages the interclasped hands, and, then stooping reverently to the bowed gray head, she lays her own in silent benediction upon it, and voicelessly transposes the gracious words that, centuries ago, fell from the blessed lips of the divine man: "His sins, though many, are forgiven, for he *loved much*."

And now, already the red rose of dawn blooms in the summer sky, and, like belated ghosts, that may not bide for the coming sun, we steal noiselessly from the chamber of death.

* * * * * * *

Year after year the blue-eyed periwinkle

blooms upon a low, short grave in that "City of the Silent," the Saganock burying-ground. Its headstone is a shaft of Carrara marble. A carven lily, broken on its stem, in emblem of the unfilled promise of a life, droops over this simple inscription:

"Her name was Mabel."

In the old burying-ground beneath the pines is another grave, and, before the sod had greened upon it, it was Miss Paulina's pious care to order for it a modest headstone, and, mindful of Peter's heart's earnest wish, she had "*verses cut on to it.*"

Resolutely turning her face from her own sad world of graves, Miss Paulina lives unselfishly on, in other lives. Gentle deeds of beneficence and love blossom thickly along her gracious life-road, as roses flower upon their stems, and never dream that through them the world is made more sweet.

Harmy, at seventy, still considers herself quite equal to any domestic exigency. Reuben, "taking heed to his ways," has minded her sage admonitions. He has "jined the church." Mandy Ann and he have become

one. This marriage scarce makes a ripple in their tranquil lives, which are still consecrated to the service of the House of Parker.

Timothy Tucker no longer keeps the iron doors of the prison guard-room. Soon after the sudden departure of Warden Flint, and the consequent subtraction of May-blossom from his uncongenial existence, he migrated to California. He has become, in sunny San Francisco, the pleased proprietor of a flourishing bird store. As duly set forth on his sign of blue and gold, "birds, cages, and seed, with bouquets and cut flowers of every description," may be obtained at this mercantile establishment. The ex-turnkey's favourite customer is a little maid, of ten sweet Californian summers. Her eyes are like the sapphire of a noon-day heaven. Her hair is the braided sunshine of her own golden clime.

No one (not even the charming little buyer herself) guesses why the bird and flower dealer invariably gives this fair creature twice her money's worth of violets, pinks, or roses, or why, last winter, he trained, to the utmost of their pretty possibilities, two yellow canaries as a Christmas "gift for his fair." But one day, as this little maiden, bearing in her

hand a lavish bunch of Parma violets, turned smiling from his door, the listening parrots heard him thus pensively soliloquize: "Blue eyes, but jes' such hair, an' *her* step, to a T! An' a wonderful takin' little creetur you air, to be sure. But (sorrowfully shaking his grizzled head), you ain't *her*. No, no, no! Not by a long shot!"

ESCAPED

ESCAPED.

IN this roomy corner cell, which rejoices in a glazed window, and is far more cheerful than the ordinary hospital compartment, a pale, earnest man, with sensitive face and iron-gray hair, sits writing.

Looking over his shoulder, you would perceive that (absurd though it may seem) he is making entries in a regular nautical log-book. This has been, for many years, his daily practise; for this convict, whose bowed form and subdued mien retain no traces of the sometime "jolly tar," is a born sailor.

His prison name is Robert Henderson. His is the old, old story — a wild bout in port; a drunken quarrel with a drunken shipmate; a reckless assault; an unintentional murder, and a consequent life-term in the State Prison. Although in hospital for treatment, Henderson is still on his feet, and quite competent to undertake the care of the feebler

sinners who are, from time to time, consigned to the other cot in this — his sleeping cell.

Eighteen slow years behind the bars have brought in their weary train salutary repentance and unavailing regret; and, under their pressure, he is gradually going to pieces. Time has been when his whole being was dominated by a restless, homesick yearning for the sea — a form of that nostalgia, recognized in medicine as a real malady, the passionate craving of the land-locked sailor for his wide, billowy home — the sea.

Long before his coming up to hospital, I had noted this mild-mannered convict, and had heard his story from official lips.

By his correct demeanour, and careful adherence to prison rules, he had found favour in the sight of the warden, who tacitly gave him such sympathy as, without in the least palliating crime, may be bestowed even upon a murderer, when his fatal act is the unfortunate result of momentary frenzy, and does not indicate innate depravity.

Henderson, being a creature of superabundant vitality, it is but inch by inch that he has physically succumbed to an environment absolutely antipodal to both temperament and

training. Naturally reserved and reticent, he seldom complained; but, on a certain day, when the scent of some foreign fruit that I had brought him may have stirred within him old memories of tropical seas and gracious sunny lands, he gave voice to his yearning. It was on a prison reception-day, and I was his "visitor;" and long after, when the end came, I remembered his words, and thanked God that he had at last given this long-denied being the desire of his soul.

"Yes, lady," he said, "I was born and reared on the sea, my mother being a sea-captain's wife, and at the time making the round voyage with my father. Why! even *now*," he murmured passionately, "I could cross the Atlantic in my shirt-sleeves, lady; but *here!* in a close, damp cell! My God! I shiver with cold, and moan and fret like a sick baby. Often, of a night, I cannot sleep for thought of it all. I pace my den hour after hour, like a caged beast. I cry to Heaven, the sea! the sea! Almighty God, give me but once more to look upon it, to smell brine, to see a ship bound bravely over its broad billows! After that, let what will come, I can die content."

From the slow monotony of the prison shoe-shop, Henderson has, at last, been released by ill-health, and is now permanently established in the hospital; and, dismal though it be to find oneself a tenant of a hospital cell, and facing the blank certainty that there is for him no egress, save by that final inexorable door opening into the blind unknown, he is comparatively happy. So sweet is the merest taste of liberty to long-denied lips!

Now he may, hour by hour, stroll in the prison-yard, brightened in summer by its small oasis of verdure and bloom (the flower-beds), and, in winter, still wholesomely sweet with keen, bracing air and genial sunshine. The old sea-longing still haunts his enfeebled mind; but now, it is a thing to be borne. He has outlived the fierce vehemence of human desire; and, with little positive suffering, is slowly wearing away of lingering consumption, complicated with incurable disease of the heart.

* * * * * * *

The prison clock is on the stroke of nine, and the prison itself (already in its nightcap) composes itself for a long night's rest.

In the deserted guard-room and along the

now empty corridors, silence undisturbedly reigns. Here in the hospital the quiet of the hour is less unbroken. Five consumptives (as is their wont, poor fellows!) will cough the slow night away; and, in yonder cell, a man, with a great carbuncle under his ear, groans, *sotto-voce*, at every breath.

On the second floor, in the large cell or room at the head of the stairway (which is, as occasion requires, used for the sick, for the holding of prison inquests, or for an operating-room, and but one of whose several cots is now occupied), a convict is dying. He has been long about it, for his vitality is tremendous. In his single body there would seem to be the makings of, at least, two centenarians.

Nature, however, *makes* us men, and the devil *mars* them. And here, before the coming of his first gray hair, lies the sin-spoilt material for a brisk old patriarch of a hundred years!

He is not, however, to be lightly put out of existence. Even this nefarious old prison does not readily dispatch him. Consumption, the chosen "red slayer" of its "slain," he flouts with his last fluttering breath.

This daring and desperate sinner has proved himself, even under the disadvantages of restraint, a splendid villain. Unweariedly indefatigable in his efforts to regain his forfeited liberty, and, prolific of resources to that end, his custody (even when in close confinement) has sorely vexed the official soul. By repeated assaults upon his fellow convicts and the prison officers (for which sanguinary purpose he has fashioned the deadliest weapons from the most inconceivable of articles), he has well-nigh lost all claim on human sympathy; and the entire prison community has long since given him over to his diabolic possessor. Failing health, and its attendant necessities, have partially subdued this fierce, unresting spirit; but even now, in the last stage of consumption, unable to lift himself from his pillow, and already on the solemn outskirts of an unknown world, the abnormal evil is yet strong within him. For a past day or two he has been delirious; and though far too wasted to require physical restraint, he is, even in his helplessness, half terrible. The passing soul still revels amid remembered scenes of debauch, or gloats upon the foul details of crime. The night-watcher's labour

is here one of love; yet, tender as the convict is to his ailing comrade, this dying wretch scarce appeals to his humanity; and night-watching zeal is, in this case, inconveniently cool. Robert Henderson — who in this favouring month of June somewhat renews his failing strength — has kindly volunteered to sit up to-night with this unpopular patient. The superintendent, ever ready to encourage good intent, and scarce aware of Henderson's unfitness for the hard mental strain of a lonely night beside so uncanny a death-bed, accedes to his request, and at nine o'clock he takes his place in the dismal apartment. The cells are, as is customary, secured for the night. The superintendent leaves the hospital; the cook, who, with his attendant, is also a hospital nurse, retires to his rest; and Henderson, locked in, is left alone with his charge. It chances to be his first watch beside a dying bed, and an exceptionally trying one it proves.

As he listens to the muttered ravings of this frenzied creature, he already half regrets the humane impulse that tempted him to brave the horrors of such a night. An hour passes. The man raves on. Terrors, vague and su-

pernatural, begin to seize upon the watcher's unnerved mind. Surely already evil fiends are swooping on their prey — the parting soul! And in the silence that now alternates with these fierce outbreaks of insanity, he half fancies in the dusky room the whirr of their uncanny wings. He wishes to God it were morning, and he well out of this! The night, however, has scarce begun; and so, manfully bracing himself to his task, he resolves to stick to his post, doing his best, let what will come. Suddenly the patient ceases to rave, and seems to struggle gaspingly with some strong and terrible foe!

White foam flecks his blue lips, and great beads of agony start to his brow. Hurrying to his side, Henderson tenderly wipes the pain-distorted forehead, and offers him drink. His teeth are fast clenched. He makes a rude attempt to drive the comforter from him. Obeying the motion, Henderson seats himself and awaits the issue.

By and by the convulsive gasping ceases. Again he bends over the sufferer. How strangely quiet the man is! No motion, no sound — not even a breath! Heaven help him! he has gone at last!

How dismal will the long night be locked in here alone with a corpse! Death sits horribly on these evil features. Upon the hard, set face, one may still trace the footprints of unholy and unbridled desire. The mouth is much drawn. Its strong white teeth show grimly between the blue parted lips, and, to the watcher's nervous fancy, they seem, even in death, to snarl viciously at the beholder. Livid circles underline the sunken eyes, now wide and glassy, beneath their heavy brows, and, as Henderson morbidly conceives, turned wrathfully upon *him*. If he could but close those terrible eyes! Alas! he dare not with his shaky hand attempt so bold a thing! A moment ago he could have turned his back upon the ugly sight; *now* it is too late. By some hypnotic fascination beyond his control, his gaze is riveted to the corpse.

The slow hours wear on. The living and the dead, set face to face, grimly confront each other. The dead man never winces. The living man, at last, succumbs to the stress and horror of the situation. The walls of the apartment reel and totter. The corpse dims and fades before him, and he falls limp and unconscious to the floor.

Sensation gradually returning to the overwrought watcher, he finds himself still miserably faint and weak. It is, however, *something* to have escaped the spell of those death-glazed eyes, and, thanking God, he strives to get upon his feet. In his effort to rise, he stumbles clumsily over a small dark object upon the floor, close beside the bed. Regaining his poise, he discerns that it is the coarse, heavy shoe of a convict. He lifts it, thinking to place it beside its fellow beneath the cot. His hand is weak and nerveless. It escapes his grasp, and falls clattering to the floor. As it strikes, his ear is surprised by the click of some metallic substance. A small shining implement lies at his feet. He picks it up. It is a miniature steel saw, and must somehow have been concealed in this shoe of the dead man. Curiously examining *it* and the shoe, he discovers (what in the dim light had at first eluded his notice) a displaced inner sole, thin, but firm and nicely fitted. Removing it, he sees that the shoe is still intact, and that this neatly adjusted super-sole was but an ingenious blind, adroitly concealing the precious implement, which, had fate proved less unkind, should have

opened to the dead prisoner the long untrodden way of liberty.

It is not in Robert Henderson's nature to peach on a comrade, living or dead, and, carefully restoring the saw to its hiding-place, he readjusts the sham sole, and, with a touch of that reverence which one instinctively yields to the belongings of the dead, puts the shoe aside.

Still weak and trembling, but no longer magnetically drawn to the corpse, he totters to the grated window, which, to eke out the sick man's failing breath, has been left open. Dropping upon the rude stool beside it, he leans his yet dizzy head upon the sill. A wandering breath of the summer night steals gently in. How balmy it is, this tender night wind! And he, a worn creature at a prison grating, might be a gentle lady at her lattice, so softly it caresses his wasted cheek!

Yet, kindly as it is, it does not wholly restore his wonted vigour. At intervals, a deathly faintness oppresses him. A fearful sinking of heart and limb, as if life and courage were, together, oozing away. What if the end were indeed come, and he were to die to-night, unattended and alone; his filmy

eyes looking their last upon earth, still confronted by that odious dead face, that, even in the world beyond, may still pursue him, as, for years, *another* dead face has!

His heart scarce beats at all! Ah, well, it is time he should be gone! But to die alone! Were daylight but here, he might summon help — might get from the dispensary some relieving draught, or soothing powder, wherewith to blunt the dreaded sting of Death.

A sudden thought flashes through his troubled brain. There, just beside the dead man's bed, stands his medicine! A small phial half-filled with dark-brown liquid; he read its label, idly, as he sat beside the sufferer — "Cough Drops." Summoning such strength as he can command, he staggers across the room, and, eagerly seizing the phial, drains it to the dregs. This composite remedy is well-freighted with morphine, and, though perfectly safe in moderate doses, is by no means to be administered *ad libitum*. Opium, as we know, is dual in effect, inducing irregular and excited brain action, as well as coma. This over-liberal potion of "Cough Drops" works swift wonders in Henderson's sensitive, excitable organism. He is soon upon his feet

again, and, as he says gaily to himself, "As bright as ever, and well-nigh as strong." A sensuous delight in existence again thrills his torpid being; a wild eager craving to taste once more its long withheld joy! "Die to-night? Ah, no! How *could* he have imagined a thing so unlikely? He is but a young man yet, and life lies long and pleasant before him. Stimulated by his energizing draught, he presses eagerly to the window, and, grasping its hindering bars,—in a spurt of the old-time Herculean strength,—wrenches at them mightily. They are fast and strong. In the scuttle they are wider apart, and, apparently, more slender. The summer wind steals deliciously in. Ah! these are but mere thimblefuls. Outside, now, a man might take his fill. The old sea longing is again hot within him. Outside these cruel bars it lies, broad and fair, as of old. The whole wide world is there! Liberty, happiness, and maybe health. At least, leave to die outside of prison walls.

"Why! Men smothering in subterranean dungeons have, like burrowing moles, groped their slow way to freedom; while he"—a swift thought illumines his seething brain,

sending the life-tide swifter through his pulses, and electrifying his entire being! The saw! the dead man's saw! There it is, safe in the shoe, and not in vain has Heaven graciously discovered it to him! Still reverent of the belongings of the dead, he takes in his hand the precious shoe, removes from it the secreted implement, and, in a moment more, is eagerly at work. Noiselessly placing a small table beneath the scuttle, he finds it still beyond his reach. Placing a stool upon the table, he mounts it, and is soon sawing away at the bars above him. In this aperture, designed rather for sanitary than illuminating purposes, the bars are comparatively wide apart, and far more slender than the window gratings. The removal of a single bar will give egress to his emaciated form. The saw works well. His task is soon accomplished,—the dead man all the while (as he excitedly fancies) angrily staring from the bed. Faugh! How close the air is in this infernal place! A moment ago he was fast here, locked in with a horrible thing that grins and glares at a man, and is already decomposing! It is over now. In a moment more, he will have left it all; will

be free. The coarse covering of an empty cot is soon torn into strong strips. Deftly knotting these together, sailor-wise, he tucks the improvised rope under his arm, and, holding it fast, climbs out upon the roof, and, creeping cautiously on all fours to its extremity, has secured it firmly to the spout.

Clinging desperately to his flimsy tackle, he lowers himself, hand over hand, to its end. He is still at a remove of twenty feet from the ground.

Under normal mental conditions, Henderson might have demurred at so bold a fall; now, no whit appalled, he loosens his hold, and drops, scarcely bruised, to the earth. Kissing in ecstacy the clammy ground, he looks mutely up to heaven. It is a prayer! And, rising to his feet, he hastily puts off his heavy shoes (which in the hurry and excitement of departure he has forgotten to remove), and, listening intently for the night watchman's patrolling step, assures himself that he is at this moment reconnoitering some distant stretch of his beat. Now is the time! Stealthily gaining the wall, he looks cautiously about him; selecting a spot comfortably distant from a sentry-box, with a

pile of refuse lumber and some empty lime barrels, providentially at hand, he improvises a rude scaffolding, and, eagerly mounting it, clambers in safety to the top.

A neighbouring clock is striking two. The night is cloudy. There will be no moon, and not a star to be seen. It is an easy thing to manage the rest; and, well beyond the prison walls, it cannot be far to that goal of his longing — the sea.

Safe, though somewhat shaken by his bold fall, he finds his legs and pushes resolutely on. He moves but slowly. Through long disuse, his locomotion has become rusty; yet, keeping steadily to his snail-like pace, he threads the deserted streets, and presently finds himself upon the broad highway. He has grasped his clew; and, following it, presses bravely on. The shoeless feet, already hurt and bleeding, get wearily over the rough, hard ground. The clouds are breaking; and, here and there, a kindly star twinkles upon his pathway.

His spurious strength — opium-engendered and ephemerally sustained by this new wine of liberty — is waning.

The road lies long before him. He drags

wearily on. He stumbles often, and once has even fallen from sheer exhaustion. At last he diverges, instinctively, from the travelled highway. Another weary pull. Now on a scarce-rutted wagon track, across open grassy flats, and then a sudden pause — a thrill of ecstatic joy! The salt sea-breeze is in his eager nostrils! "O God! O blessed God! it is the sea!" and for eighteen weary years he has not once "snuffed brine!" He hears it, singing in the dear old monotone; and, in a moment more, here it is, spread out before him, grand as ever, and wide! Oh, *how* wide!

Tottering feebly across the sands down to its very foam-fringed edge, he sinks tremblingly upon his knees, and in ecstacy hugs the wet shore. His strained muscles relax, and, too spent to rise, he stretches himself upon the strand. His brain is hazy with morphine. A drowsy bliss balms his tired senses. He looks dreamily at the broad heaven (already flushed with coming day), and, fondly searching its half-forgotten face, mutters drowsily to himself: "What! *all* that *sky?* How wide the world is!" He closes his eyes for the moment, oppressed

with the weight of immensity! His mood changes suddenly to one of eager, childish delight. Far out at sea, through the soft bloom of dawn's red rose, the sun is emerging from his bath of flame, a huge disk of fire. Raising himself wearily upon his elbow, he watches its unaccustomed face with curious half-recognition. "The sun? yes, this *must* be the sun! Ages ago he saw it rise out of the sea. Somebody was with him then. Who was it? His name was — what *was* his name? and where *is* he *now?*

"Dead, maybe. Everybody is dead — everybody — Tom, and the other left behind there in the grated pen! He, too, may be dying. He is faint and weary, and has so little breath after that long tramp! Ah, well! he is close to his mother now, and where else should a man die? He is tired, though — dog tired, and must rest awhile before he heaves anchor." The tide is rising. A dash of salt spray spatters his cheek. The sun comes bravely up from the sea; and, yonder, a ship is coming in. In dreamy abstraction he watches it with half-shut eyes. "How drowsy he is! How came he here? Where is he *going?* What a coil it is! No matter, he is

going to sleep now; and by and by he will wake up, and get his bearings. It is all right — all well — he is in *her* arms! How beautiful she is — the blue-eyed mother! And — hush! hark! she is singing him to sleep!" His mind wanders. He murmurs irrelevantly on — "Poor mother! She is pale and worn! It will grieve her if her boy turns in without a prayer." He tries to fumble to his knees, and fails. Recomposing his limbs, he folds his large hands, childwise, upon his breast, and distinctly and reverently repeats the old, old prayer —

> "Now I lay me down to sleep,
> I pray the Lord my soul to keep,
> If I should die before I wake
> I pray the Lord — "

"Good night, mother —" He is fast asleep.

Henderson has chanced upon an unfrequented strip of shore, and, though it is now high day, no one comes, not even his pursuers, who, in the coarse stiff grass must have missed his shoeless trail.

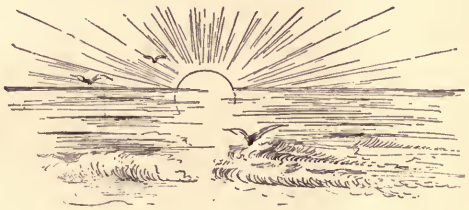
The tide is still coming in. He does not waken. Now and then an intrusive wave

breaks over his feet. By and by one creeps up to his waist; and, directly, the sea gives him a broad, rough douche. He moans, and starts in his dream. Another wave! How strong and fierce it is — this sea — held in the hollow of God's safe hand!

It rouses him at last. He starts to his feet, and towering, for one brief moment, high above the seething waves, sends over the blue expanse a long, loud "Ship ahoy!" Then, shading his eyes with his thin hand, he gazes eagerly expectant — far out to sea. A slow smile breaks, like the dawn, over his face, and, folding his arms, he waits. The waves come curling in, and, breaking at his feet, ruthlessly drench him with foam and spray. He does not heed them. With straining gaze, he waits that inbound phantasmal ship. Another and a happier smile! And, with a keen cry of joy, he waves his eager hand and again sends over the sea a jubilant "Ship ahoy!" He makes a forward pace or two — a wave is coming in, huge and hungry; he sways, totters, and falls. It swallows him and hurries back. And still the sea lies broad and blue beneath the smiling heaven. The white gull skims its azure breast on

rhythmic wing. Proud ships bring happy ventures gaily in; or, sailing out and on, dwindle to specks and melt at last, like shapeless dreams, into the distant blue. And still the curling waves creep with slow singing up the sand. With *him* "there is no more sea!"

THE END.



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